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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate what effect providing supplemental background knowledge in the form of a book talk would have on first graders' listening comprehension following a read aloud. Research shows that providing background knowledge creates a foundation and/or builds upon previously set schema on which further information can be placed. This study asked whether specifically addressing information contained within a read-aloud trade book during a pre-reading book talk would create significant short-term schema that would later become activated during listening comprehension. From a class of 20 first grade students (all of whom heard all treatment titles read), 6 students, representing a cross section of the class population, were post-tested after the readings. Six titles were delivered, the initial three were read with no book talk, while the second set of three were accompanied by a book talk, props, and theatrics. The post-test for each of the titles consisted of two vocabulary words gleaned from the book text as well as two literal and two inferential questions. The post-test showed significant improvement in the students' listening comprehension using the treatment conditions over the control conditions. (Contains 60 references and 4 tables of data. Appendixes contain: the survey instrument keys and book talks; literature used in the session; rubric instruments used to score post-tests; survey instruments; and full transcription.) (Author/RS)

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THE EFFECT OF BOOK TALKS ON THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION OF FIRST GRADE STUDENTS

A Project
Presented to
The College of Education
San Diego State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in Education

by

Peggy Estes Cross

Summer 1999

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate what effects providing supplemental background knowledge via book talk to first graders would have on their listening comprehension following a read aloud. Research shows that providing background knowledge creates a foundation and/or builds upon the previously set schema on which further information can be placed. This study asked whether specifically addressing information contained within a read aloud trade book during pre-reading book talk would create significant short-term schema that would maintain to become activated in listening comprehension. From a class of 20 first grade students (all of whom heard all treatment titles read), six students, representing a cross section of the class population, were post-tested after the readings. Six titles were delivered, the initial three were read with no book talk while the second set of three were accompanied by book talk, props, and theatrics. The post-test for each of the titles consisted of two vocabulary words gleaned from the book text, two literal, and two inferential questions. The post-test showed significant improvement in listening comprehension of the treatment conditions over the control conditions.

THE EFFECT OF BOOK TALKS ON THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION OF FIRST GRADE STUDENTS

by

Peggy Estes Cross

A Masters Project submitted to the faculty of San Diego State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education, Elementary Curriculum and Instruction.

San Diego, California

Summer 1999

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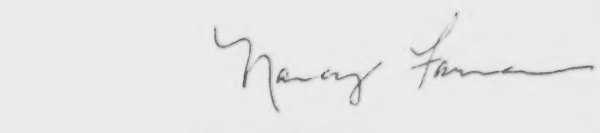

Nancy Farnan
San Diego State University

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The listening/reading activity known as Read Aloud is a practice that is traditional within humankind. From the days years ago when town criers would read royal proclamations to the peasants of the land to the modern practice of listening to books on tape, we have read publicly for the purpose of conveyance of information, thought, and emotion. Read aloud was used during the Colonial Days in America as the method for teaching reading. Passages from the Bible were read aloud over and over and discussed as many times until the student comprehended what was being read. Students learned to read back then by sheer memorization.

There are many kinds of read aloud. It is possible simply to read a selection aloud for the experience of conveying a story. This is a legitimate use of read aloud. The student can simply listen and enjoy the action within the story. Read aloud can also be utilized as a means for bolstering background information on a topic with which students are already familiar. When used in this manner, the student's comprehension of the material is extended due to their familiarity with the subject matter. Read aloud can also be used in the case where the student has little or no prior familiarity with the subject being read. In the case of the latter, research has shown that cueing prior information and eliciting response from listeners will aid and bolster listening retention on the part of the audience (Trelease, 1995). But what the teacher wants is to bolster listening *comprehension* on the

part of the audience. What techniques are required to increase a student's comprehension of the material being read aloud?

Oftentimes, there is concern over the time that reading aloud is taking from the curriculum. It is felt that when the teacher is reading aloud a passage from a book, the students are placidly sitting and not reaping any benefit other than the passage of time. Yet, when one faces the reality of the intent of primary education, reading *is* the curriculum (Trelease, 1982). Kindergarten and first grade students are especially aided in the accumulation of vocabulary and book language experiences through read aloud sessions. Primary teachers are therefore *supporting* the curriculum by reading aloud rather than neglecting it. Listening comprehension is the support system that acts as the backbone of reading comprehension and acquisition. Book talks have emerged to augment that support system (Keane, 1999; Trelease, 1995).

Statement of Problem

One purpose of reading aloud is to allow the future reader the opportunity to hear the "language" of books. The future reader must understand that books aren't written in the same cadence and rhythm that we use to speak with one another in the course of daily conversation. With written language, authors, be they novelist, historian, poet, editor, or schoolchildren, have the ability to think through *exactly* what they intend to say. By virtue of that fact, the writer is able to carefully construct strings of very precise descriptive words to convey exactly the proper emotion. That privilege is not always available to casual conversation or even to carefully worded argument (Hoover & Tunmer,

1993). It is the lilt of the written word that is staged in the read aloud session. Whether the purpose of the written piece is to entertain, inform, or persuade, the emotions are portrayed in the composition of the words. This composition is what we want students to begin to notice from even their very first hearing of Mother Goose. We want them to recognize that there *is* a difference between the words that we read and the ones that we speak from our hearts and our minds. We want children to begin to build an educational foundation based on their verbal literacy--part of which come from experiences through hearing literature via read aloud.

If a teacher reads a story that is totally out of the experience of a student, then the student will have a very low level of comprehension of the story. But if the teacher prefaced the reading of the story with a book talk wherein the background of the author was presented along with why the author came to write the book, then the teacher could extend the student's level of experience to embrace the background of the story. This brings us to a possible solution of how to increase the potential listening comprehension of a student. By simply presenting an introduction to a story through the use of a pre-reading book talk, can a teacher increase the overall listening comprehension level of a student?

Very little is ever mentioned in the research literature of the process through which listeners of read aloud may be aided in boosting their comprehension levels of a new story. Are there things which the reader might do that could help the listener to become cued/receptive/responsive to new information contained in the story about to be

presented? Is there method in the storyteller's bag of tricks that can help excite the listener's receptive behavior so that the reading is as effective as the listener's abilities will allow?

Research Question

Such are the sorts of questions that drive this inquiry into the efficacy of a book talk on read aloud selections. Are book talk introductions an appropriate method that should be instituted to entice students to *want* to listen? Are there specific methods, questions, or practices that should be followed in a book talk that will enable students to be cued into specific aspects of the material so that they can listen as efficiently as their mental maturity allows?

What sort of research has been done on the understanding of comprehension in early readers? What sort of background have successful beginning readers experienced? What methods have been introduced to struggling readers via read aloud that help to bolster their success? How can teachers (including parents, librarians, volunteers, siblings, etc.) use these researched cues to improve the listening/comprehension/prediction/reading characteristics of new readers?

Do book introductions and the corresponding questioning/responses affect the attitude of new readers/listeners? Can book talk introductions reduce tension created for new readers?

What degree of background knowledge needs to be in place before more information may be scaffolded onto that prior knowledge? Is inference enough? In the

case of mixed groups, wherein some students are knowledgeable and others are not, what sort of introduction is necessary so that *all* of the students come to the same level of understanding? Is it advisable to use the background knowledge of student peers in the introduction portion of the lesson to advance the prior knowledge of their inexperienced peers?

The purpose of this investigation was to explore the effects of an introductory book talk to pique the curiosity and provide background (prior) knowledge for the beginning reader in a first grade classroom setting. By filling in the blanks on background knowledge and erasing confusion caused by missing or erroneous prior knowledge, the researcher hopes to lend credence to the practice of appropriately placed and information-filled book talks. The investigation begins by trying to answer some of the questions which have been set forth in this introduction. Ultimately, however, will introductory information presented prior to reading aloud be of benefit to the listening comprehension of the beginning reader? Answering that question is the goal of this project.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

A review of the literature in the area of listening comprehension reveals that an important component in its acquisition is the activity known as read aloud (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Lapp & Flood, 1992; Trelease, 1982, 1995). Read aloud is a technique for introducing children to books and the language within them. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) qualify the definition to include

> the teacher reading to the whole class or small groups. A carefully selected body of children's literature is used; the collection contains a variety of genres and represents our diverse society. Favorite texts, selected for special features, are reread many times (p. 22).

The degree to which read aloud is utilized is dependent upon situation and intent. The more involved the session becomes--the amount of activated background knowledge (including new- and cued prior knowledge), verbal interaction between reader and other listeners, detail of responses to inquiries, etc.--the more likelihood that listening comprehension will be activated and utilized. The use of read aloud creates verbal literacy which children in turn use to create background knowledge on which to seat information coming in via listening comprehension.

Unfortunately, we live in a world where millions of children have their verbal literacy built and maintained by television (Trelease, 1982, 1995). We have come to rely

on television as an ever-ready companion to our children when we are unable or unwilling to provide that attention ourselves. Consequently, children are being introduced to language patterns that are representative of the programs which they are allowed--or encouraged--to watch. This lack of human contact and spontaneous interaction has resulted in a startling "35 percent of preschool children who (are) diagnosed with speech delays of six months or more" (Trelease, 1995, p. 40). These children are not properly prepared for school and not ready to start at their expected chronological age. Not all pre-school children are weaned on a television diet of Sesame Street.

In addition to the poor quality of dialogue provided by average programming, television rarely leaves anything to the imagination. Children are shown all that they need and more to follow a storyline. The opportunity to visualize and self-create is not offered. Children whose sole source of entertainment and education comes via the television are crippled by poor examples of dialogue and descriptive discourse, and overt display of events and intentions. They are denied the opportunity to appreciate and savor the magic of words and their creative powers.

The practice of reading aloud is intended to teach children "to awaken their sleeping imaginations and improve their deteriorating language skills" (Trelease, 1982, p. 11). In order to do that, we need to train children to listen with their minds and not just their eyes. They need to learn to grasp information and cues from speech rather than have them fed to them through the medium of television. Children need to be read to and taught how to filter verbal information through their minds (Manning, 1998; Trelease, 1982).

One of the major tools toward this end are book talks. The purpose of book talk is to provide prior knowledge of a story in the form of an introduction to the story, its background, and a familiarization with its contents and events. Students at the first grade level are especially needy in the area of prior knowledge. (They) need to have their auditory memories cued before a story that may be unfamiliar to them is read (Dechant, 1991).

The Importance and Significance of Read Aloud

> Oral language is the foundation of the primary curriculum (and) is a powerful system that children bring with them to their first school experience (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, p. 21).

For years research has pointed to the importance of reading aloud to children (Manning, 1998; Morrow, 1989; Trelease, 1982; and others). The touchstone publication from the Commission on Reading, Becoming a Nation of Readers (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985) espoused the importance of reading, commenting, "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children" (p. 23). According to Trelease (1997), patterns emerged from a 1991 study involving 210,000 students from 32 countries that indicated that being read to was among the indicators for successful readers. Those findings were echoed by Cullinan (1993) who said, "No activity does more to prepare a child for success in school" (p. 10).

But it isn't merely the physical act of listening during read aloud that influences the acquisition of the skills essential to the act of reading. During read aloud, students are developing an array of benefit, among which they are becoming familiar with "the sense of story, increase vocabulary and extend their oral language development, and develop knowledge of written language syntax" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 22). They are thereby able to establish and identify sources for the clues which aid in lending stability to their comprehension of the content of information gathered through a listening experience.

It is not until grade three (Guthrie, 1973) that most students will have a full grasp of reading abilities and be able to integrate all of the skills necessary to read comfortably with independence. It is important, therefore, to present and encourage construction of a strong foundation in the primary grades for the scaffolding that will produce efficient reading comprehension. That foundation consists of a heavy emphasis on read aloud activities (Manning, 1998; Morrow, 1989).

First graders have specific skill abilities and are generally not able to adapt decoding *and* listening skills to accommodate higher level circumstances. They are much better able to listen at a higher level than they are to read at a higher level (Jansen, Jacobsen, & Jensen, 1978). Listening is the skill which is adaptable to refinement at this early stage. Children at beginning reading levels have the mental facility to imagine. Specific instruction to their mental processes--of which listening comprehension is one--is within the capability of children as young as those in first grade (Palincsar & Brown,

1986; Trelease, 1982). The importance of formal instruction toward listening comprehension is that students of this age know only what they have been directly taught, not having the cognitive skills to generalize for specific situations (Singer & Dolan, 1985). Schuder, Clewel, and Jackson (1989) further reveal that "background knowledge is activated well before text knowledge. This means that more information is coming from the head than from the text, especially in the early stages of the reading process " (p. 226). These specific skills may be addressed through the book talk before, while, and after reading a selection.

The influences of read aloud are numerous. Among them is the increased exposure to unfamiliar words. A study done by Hayes and Ahrens (1993) indicates that rare words (defined as not appearing among the most commonly used 10,000 words) are far more likely (three times more so) to appear in the script of a children's book than to occur in a conversation between adult and child. Additionally, the use of common words are practiced.

The threads of read aloud weave an unseen, yet evident, internal cognitive cloth. The cloth produces episodes of imagination in the mind of the listener, cued by prior experience and background knowledge Consequent to this awakening of imagination and visualization, imagery spurs comprehension (Bransford & Franks, 1974; Levin, 1976).

Among the characteristics of students who read the most was that they came from classrooms where the teachers most frequently read aloud (Trelease, 1997). The influence of reading aloud goes beyond the conveyance of mere words. Thoughts and emotions

make their way across the boundary of the telling of the story. Reading aloud is an opportunity for the reader to mentally touch the listener with a thought or comment that has the potential to heal an emotional wound. Children are often dealing with emotions and issues that can be answered through the effective use of fiction. The reader is as concerned with this issue as he is with the actually teaching of book language and vocabulary via read aloud sessions (Schifini, 1997; Trelease, 1982).

Definition of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension involves formulating hypotheses and evaluating through analogy. Hypothesis is defined as "a function of the interactions between text and background knowledge" (Schuder, Clewell, & Jackson, 1989, p. 226). This process implies prior and background knowledge. Prior- and background knowledge are used in the production of an hypothesis, which is an essential product of reading comprehension (Schuder, Clewell, & Jackson, 1989). These same researchers offer this definition of readingcomprehension:

> We can think of reading comprehension as a process of constructing and evaluating an interpretation of a text where the interpretation is understood to be a hypothesis about the meaning of the text (p. 225).

In the case of children at the first grade level, the student is dependent upon the reader to present the text in as efficient a manner as possible; as close to the intent of the author as possible. In a read aloud, the reader needs to have a clear impression of the "envisonment" of the text. His ability to accomplish this will in turn afford the listeners

the opportunity to construct their own "envisionments" (Langer, 1995). "The meaning changes and builds and grows as a (listener) is moved through the text" (San Diego County Office of Education, 1997, p. 6).

Some researchers specifically address the matter of reading comprehension, among them, Gough and Tunmer (1986).

> Reading requires the *product* of decoding and comprehension, or D x C=R, where each variable ranges from 0 (nullity) to 1 (perfection). We trust that it is clear that by comprehension we mean, not reading comprehension, but rather *linguistic* comprehension, that is, the process by which, given lexical (i.e. word) information, sentences and discourses are interpreted (p. 7).

By this view, known as the Simple View, both components, decoding (e.g., word recognition) and linguistic (listening) comprehension are of equal importance (Hoover & Tumner, 1993 p. 3). This view may be shown as a table (see Table 1):

Table 1. The simple view of linguistic comprehension

Word Recognition	Listening Comprehension	Reading
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	1	0
1	1	1

In contrast to linguistic (listening) comprehension, reading comprehension must be based on an interpretation of a *written* sample, wherein the subjects ability to respond to questions relative to the read narrative is revealed (Hoover & Tunmer, 1993).

By virtue of the sequencing that must evidence itself, linguistic (listening) comprehension must come *before* decoding (word recognition) (Hoover & Tumner, 1993). The formation and solidification of listening comprehension is critical for the emergent reader.

It is the reading comprehension of the person reading that influences the listening comprehension of the attending child. This is the reason that so many researchers encourage a person reading to carefully select, preview, and then anticipate the method of presentation before actually presenting the selection in a read aloud session (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Manning, 1998; Trelease, 1995; and others).

Definition of Listening Comprehension

According to Hoover and Tunmer (1993), the confirmation of linguistic (listening) comprehension is a measure of "one's ability to understand language" (p. 8). This measurement is gained by having the listener "answer questions (orally) about the contents of a narrative passage presented orally" (p. 8).

All of the reading on the part of the person reading will do no good if the individual doing the receiving is not actively listening. Listening is not hearing. Listening is making conscious effort to understand what is being said.

Because his print experience is usually, at best, in the introductory stages, the beginning reader must rely on his skills having to do with listening. Without the associative literacy skills, he must rely heavily on his ability at memory and recall.

> The problems in listening parallel those in reading, and in some ways learning is more difficult through listening because students must rely more on memory (Durkin, 1978-1979, p. 487).

The conflict between written book language and a student's own natural language comes into play at this point (Hoover & Tunmer, 1993). If a student is not accustomed to the formal language contained in books, his listening comprehension may become conflicted with his natural language. Herein lies the power of reading aloud to young readers. The reading aloud introduces students to the sound of book language and prepares them to receive syntactic combinations that they may not have encountered before.

Definition of Book Talks

Essentially, book talks are readiness exercises in the form of commercials (Chambers, 1996; Keane, 1999; Trelease, 1995). These commercials for books introduce background knowledge that is relevant to the story and introduces just enough information to pique the interest of the listener to entice him to want to hear and find out more. While it is an introduction to the story, it is not a verbatim reading of the author's work. Stauffer (1969) supports this practice in principle, though he goes so far as to

advocate reading part of the story as a way of spurring interest and curiosity toward students independently completing the story.

Included in these commercials should be information pertaining to the author of the work being presented (Trelease, 1995). Consider how much more interested you are in the story of a celebrity. You are somewhat familiar with that person and you are curious to know more about him. Now consider a book that you have just opened. You know nothing of the author or the circumstances that brought the author to write the book. You are not likely to be as intrigued with the piece of literature as you would were you to have some measure of background on the author and reason for the book (Trelease, 1993).

Book talks are cousins to the shared book experiences that are used as a teaching-to-read method by beginning reading teachers. In the shared book experience method, the teacher reads to the class or to a small group of children. As he reads, the teacher discusses the story, makes predictions about events and words, and makes comments on conventions of print (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Keane, 1999; Thompson, 1993). Book talks propose to create portions of this practice as an antecedent event.

Book talk delivered before the formal reading (and possibly supplemented during and after) is a referential tool with which the student is supplied to maintain and further augment his background knowledge and listening comprehension. These are tools which will sustain and bridge the student toward reading independence until he has acquired sufficient mental and physiological maturity necessary for that independence.

What is desired of a book talk is an abbreviated retelling of the story to entice and intrigue students to want to listen to the contents of a book. You want them to awaken their listening comprehension faculties to expand their literary experience. In order to accomplish this, it necessitates becoming familiar with the story and its characters. However,

> retelling doesn't mean memorizing; it means telling the story in your own words. But if a story includes catch phrases crucial to the story, use them to encourage children to join in the retelling (Morrow, 1989, p. 47).

Trelease (1982) mentions that Madison Avenue has formulated a series of guidelines that are used in the creation of television commercials. He suggests that parents and teachers would be wise to include them to introduce and "sell" reading to children.

1. Send your message to the child when he or she is still at a receptive age. Don't wait until he's 17 to try to sell him chocolate breakfast cereal. Get him when he's 5 or 6 years old.
2. Make sure the message has enough action and sparkle in it to catch and hold the child's attention. Avoid dull moments.
3. Make the message brief enough to whet the child's appetite, to make him want to see and hear it again and again. It should be finished before the child becomes bored (p. 22).

Book talks are understandably more effective when the person reading has actually read the book (Keane, 1999; Trelease, 1997). A book talk is essentially a

commercial of the book to be read, be it aloud by a person reading or silently by the student himself. The necessity for knowing the book comes from the character of the book talk itself.

There is, however, more than the information contained on the book cover or jacket of a book. Oftentimes, the information contained on these sources are old and out-of-date. A review of the life of the author, for instance, may have an impact on the relevance of the story to the listener and become an inside secret between author and listener (reader), helping the listener (reader) to understand the background from which the book was created.

Influences of Background- and Prior Knowledge on Comprehension

There are considerations to be made in the teaching of listening comprehension that will help to assure a transference of skills. Among these skills to be considered are

1. Goals of the learner of the skills.
2. The learner's use of different classes of procedures for responding. The relationships between these classes of procedures and relationships to the goals of the learner.
3. The sources of the learner's knowledge used in the different classes of procedures, including antecedent experiences and any transfer from existing knowledge or skills.

4. In each class of procedures, the relationships between contributions of knowledge from the different sources.

5. Links between the skill acquired and existing knowledge and skills (Thompson & Fletcher-Flinn, 1993, p. 20).

With regard to the classes of procedures for responding, Chambers (1996) lists several possible cues for the teacher to use to trigger background- and prior knowledge within each student. Using these cues within the framework of whole-group instruction is especially effective as it allows the knowledge of the individual to vicariously become the experience of the group. As suggested by Chambers (1996), the following are the cues (prompts) used to elicit knowledge already in the possession of the students:

Tell me . . .

Was there anything that you liked about this book?

Was there anything that you disliked?

Was there anything that puzzled you?

Were there any patterns--any connections--that you noticed? (p. 70)

A leading proponent of book talks, Trelease (1993) equates a book talk to sitting on the porch and watching the world and its characters stroll past.

> Novelist Josephine Humphreys once explained the success of southern writers by noting that so many of them got their start sitting on front porches and watching the town go by. "From a porch," she said, "other people's lives look interesting." In a sense, the listeners to these stories will be sitting on their adolescent porches,

> watching and listening to the parade of characters in this book. My hope is that they will be interesting enough to somehow lure the passive observer off the porch and into their pages for the lifetime ahead (p. xvi).

Reading versus Listening Comprehension

> Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1973) defines comprehension as: the act or process of comprising; the act or capability of including; the act or action of grasping with the intellect; knowledge gained by comprehending; the capacity for understanding fully (p. 229).

As this term applies to the literacy activities of listening and reading, research has revealed that the act itself is capable of being divided into smaller subsets. The thinking activity which we consider as comprehension include the following components: sensations, precepts, memories, images, and concepts that an individual has acquired either directly or vicariously via experiences (Russell, 1958). All of these influences converge in the reader's/listener's mind to help construct a recognition leading to comprehension. For the beginning reader, this construct is most likely to happen through the repeated listening activities of familiar text (Singer & Donlan, 1985).

Listening comprehension comes before reading comprehension (Stauffer, 1969; Trelease, 1995). We know this to be true because a child is able to understand human speech before he is able to read human-invented writing. Children are able to listen to and decipher unknown vocabulary embedded in revealing surrounding text.

> Research shows that it is not until eighth grade that a student's reading level catches up to his or her listening level. Until that time, most students are capable of hearing, understanding, and enjoying material that is more complicated than what they can read (Trelease, 1993, p. xii).

As revealed in Hoover and Tunmer (1993), there is a general trend in research that states that in the early school grades, decoding and listening comprehension are largely unrelated (p.11). In the lower grades, including first, the decoding skills are substantially more significant in reading comprehension. However, by second grade, the listening skills are beginning to surpass decoding skills as the predominant skill (Juel, Griffith, & Gough, 1986). Therein lies the importance of specific directed teaching to these listening comprehension skills. Listening comprehension isn't a skill whose value is expirational, it is a skill upon which a student's entire educational career is dependent.

For this reason, it is important to begin introducing listening comprehension skills at the earlier grades. Students need to be attuned to the methods that will bolster and support the skills that will stair-step their ability to achieve success in reading comprehension.

The conundrum faced by the early education teacher is that students at this stage are not mature enough to begin making sense of the graphophonic representations that are equivalent to that of their vocabulary abilities. Their speaking patterns are more stable than are their "decoding, lexical access, and text organization" skills (Durkin, 1978-1979, p. 488). In order to maintain interest and enthusiasm for the formation of these skills, and

to further the background experiences so that prior knowledge may be set into place, continuing to read aloud literature, both fiction and expository, at and above the reading level of readers, is an essential practice. Students need to be exposed to a level just beyond their security. To maintain a practice of reading within their comfort zone would serve only to stagnate and stymie their progress toward independent reading.

Essentially speaking, reading and listening comprehension are the same--the active processing of language for meaning (Schwartz, 1988, p. 194). According to Hoover and Tunmer (1993),

> Reading consists of only two components, one that allows language to be recognized through a graphic representation, and another that allows language to be comprehended (p. 1).

Hoover and Tunmer (1993) outline a series of differences between oral and written language (parallel to listening and reading comprehension). In this review, they list the following "relatively minor" (p. 9) differences:

> ...the suprasegmentals represented in speech are greatly impoverished in written language; the availability of previous input makes review much easier for written than for spoken language; and the interpretation of deistic terms may be derived differently in written than in spoken language (p. 9).

From this standpoint it may be concluded that listening comprehension is highly dependent on the reader and the interpretation taken by that same person. The reader

must take care in interpreting the text being read. This interpretation would be dependent on the extent of background knowledge held by the reader.

Factors that Influence Listening Comprehension

The subject matter addressed by read aloud titles need to be diverse and cater to the interests of the equally diverse listening audience. It is this diversity that lends itself to the advantage of comprehension instruction. Singer and Dolan (1985) state:

> The broader the range and depth of their (listening) materials, the more individuals can acquire, store, and subsequently retrieve...A wide scope to the curriculum, even though not necessarily focusing on (listening) comprehension per se, will develop systems employed in comprehension, and consequently, will improve comprehension (p. 463).

Repetitive readings of favorite stories is an advantage that children who are read to have over those who do not experience this activity. Because they become very familiar with the rhythm and cadence of the story content and language they become so familiar with the text that they are able to read it for themselves, fairly word-for-word (Schwartz, 1988).

Children hear stories on three different levels: intellectual, emotional, and social (Trelease, 1982). To this end, we are insulting the intellect of students of first grade level if all we have to offer them is Dr. Seuss and similar authors. These authors have a place in the reading library of this age, but they are better served as reading tools rather than listening tools (Trelease, 1998). While students may be intellectually on a first grade level,

students in today's classroom may be well beyond that level both emotionally and socially (Trelease, 1982).

As stated previously, the person reading is an important link to listening comprehension for the new reader. The differences between oral and written language cited in the Hoover and Tunmer (1993) illustrate the influence of suprasegmentals available for conveying comprehension to the listener. Additionally, the opportunity for reviewing potentially troublesome vocabulary is approached in a different manner when text is read aloud rather than directly from the written form (Manning, 1998). Verbal instruction or statements make imprints on memory that are easier to remember if they are prefaced with previously known information. Stauffer (1969) states,

> What one hears is remembered better if it is interesting and/or familiar, has plot unity, is illustrated, and is well told. The more meaningful the associations are that can be made while listening, the better the retention will be (p. 243).

This statement ties directly into the concept of pre-reading book talks. The intention is to cue readers into important events, characters, and associative facts pertaining to the important events within that story. By providing or cueing prior knowledge, students are able to associate this knowledge with the book being read and to make paths toward listening comprehension, recognition, and memory. However, it is important that we not muddy the waters with extraneous information. "It is not prior knowledge per se that is important in comprehending, but accessing prior knowledge relevant to the text read" (Mosenthal, 1989, p. 248). Studies done to determine the direct

connection of this phenomenon have tended to indicate that cueing of listening comprehension toward a specific purpose or for specific information show that directed listening is a powerful tool toward comprehension (Marks, Doctorow, & Wittrock, 1974, Morrow, 1985; Pichert & Anderson, 1976).

Comprehension and Memory

Memory is a series of events stored as schema. The events need associate background knowledge on which to adhere the new knowledge to become memory. Since listening comprehension comes before reading comprehension (Trelease, 1982), we can understand that listening is a powerful source for learning and creating schemata in our memory.

The association that Stauffer (1969, p. 243) spoke of refers to prior/background knowledge. These associations are stored in our brains as schema. Experiences form the foundation upon which subsequent knowledge will be blended and either built onto or re-assessed. As children hear stories, they reflect on past experience and measure new information against pre-established schema to test the possibility to its validity. Prior knowledge provided by the person reading during book talk may clarify confusing episodes contained within the story and reflection on this remembered information can clear the path for listening comprehension, thus setting new knowledge into the schema.

Nuance of Dialects

The concept of comprehension in light of cultural background alludes not only to English Language Learners, but also to students whose home dialect is not standard

English. Experiences that students have had with oral language since the day of their birth will influence the comprehension of the written language that the person reading is presenting. There is not always a match between their primary home language and the formal language found in books.

The influence of native dialect becomes an issue in listening and reading comprehension. In order to gain an accurate assessment of both of these comprehensions,

> Proper assessment of the contribution of linguistic (listening) comprehension to reading comprehension can only be done when parallel materials are employed in the assessments (e.g. if narrative material is used in assessing linguistic [listening] comprehension, then narrative, as opposed to expository, material must also be used in assessing reading comprehension) (Hoover & Tunmer, 1993, p. 9).

Consideration for English Language Learners

In order to bring students who are English Language Learners up to grade level in English, the use of read aloud may be used to supplement experiences that may already have been experienced via their native language. Whether or not they have had the experiences, vicarious involvement in common human experiences are nearly as valuable as actual ones in the eyes of listening comprehension (Russell, 1958). It is for this reason that Singer and Dolan (1985) comment "a broad, liberal arts curriculum contributes to the development of systems necessary for improvement in general comprehension" (p. 472).

As with students who are native English speakers, English Language Learners need to feel comfortable with new information that they are expected to absorb. In order to

open up to that possibility, prior knowledge must be activated. If the student is not comfortable with or capable of receiving that cueing in English, he may need to participate in this activity via his primary language or perhaps by way of a translator (Gavelek & Raphael, 1998, p. 2)

Influence of the Individual Reading Aloud

Knowledge of Book Content

Trelease (1982) places a great deal of responsibility on the efficacy of read aloud on the reader. Trelease recommends that teachers of beginning readers heed the following:

1) Start with storybooks and build to novels.
2) Vary the length and subject matter of your readings.
3) Occasionally read above the child's intellectual level and challenge their minds.
4) Avoid long descriptive passages until the child's imagination and attention span are capable of handling them.
5) If your chapters are long or if you don't have enough time each day to finish an entire chapter, find a suspenseful spot at which to stop.
6) If you are reading a picture book, make sure the children can see the pictures easily.
7) Preview the book by reading it to yourself ahead of time. Such advance reading allows you to spot material you may wish to shorten, eliminate, or elaborate on.

Trelease (1997) and Keane (1999) support the contention that the informed reader is more effective in his conveyance when he has actually read the book. "Simply put, children cannot catch the fever of reading from non-reading teachers any more than they can catch a cold from someone who doesn't have one" (Trelease, 1982, p. 29).

Because the actual reception of the text can be influenced by style, behavior and attitude of the reader, the reader needs to know the contents and intent of the book's author. In book talk, the reader needs to be familiar with the situations presented within the book so that he will be prepared to anticipate and present the voice of anticipation to his listeners. Knowledge of the text and its important passages will allow the reader to help students to anticipate important moments and thereby activate the prior knowledge, anticipation, and prediction cueing systems that become so important later on in the students' reading acquisition (Mosenthal, 1989). Students in the first grade are depending upon the adults in their lives to lead them to that which will aid and benefit their education. Therefore, teachers need to know what constitutes a good read aloud. Trelease (1982) likens this search for appropriate material as the analogy--books:readers as fishing rods:fish. You have to find the right fit for the situation of the moment.

> Since the object of every good book is to catch readers, it should come equipped with a hook--a piece of the story's framework that grabs the reader and holds him through all 24 pages or all 224 pages. There must be just the right amount of tension in the story: it must be loose enough to kindle the reader's imagination, yet tight enough to keep the reader's attention (Trelease, 1982, p. 71).

The interest level, length, difficulty, and content of the book are important factors in choosing books to present to a class (Kansas Communications Development Program, 1998). Oftentimes, a class is composed of readers of mixed abilities. For this reason, a book should be chosen that will address the needs of all of the students. Subsequent readings may be chosen which will tend to advance the listening comprehension of the entire class. A gradual increase in text complexity and length is the goal in this case (Trelease, 1982).

Trelease (1982) associates a child being introduced to reading aloud to a runner in training. Conditioning to the task is one layer of the teaching. Intensity of the activity, that is, length and content, is another. When a long-distance runner becomes used to the endurance necessary to accomplish his course, he will oftentimes begin to vary the length and route of his practice. So it should be for listeners of reading aloud. The reader needs to vary the length and content of the material that he is presenting. In this way, listeners are spared the boredom that often accompanies all-too-familiar reading sessions.

Morrow's (1989) research concurs with that of Trelease (1982).

> Because story retelling is not an easy task for young children, books selected should have good plot structure...that make their story lines easy to follow and therefore easy to retell. Other elements can add to a story's predictability and thus aid initial experiences in retelling it, particularly repetitive phrases, rhyme, familiar sequences (use of numbers, letters), conversations, and general familiarity or popularity of a given story (p. 45-46).

Build Background Knowledge Before Reading

Of paramount importance, before any attempt is made toward introducing any background information whatsoever, is the knowledge of foundation upon which new information will be set (Christen & Murphy, 1991).

> When (listeners) lack the prior knowledge necessary to (listen), three major instructional interventions need to be considered: 1) teach vocabulary as a pre-(listening) step, 2) provide experiences, and 3) introduce a conceptual framework that will enable students to build appropriate background for themselves (Christen & Murphy, 1991, p. 1).

Students need to reveal and discuss what information and knowledge they already own. Research on the influence of group dynamics have served to reveal that the power in numbers is applicable in this case (Johnson et al, 1984; Manning, 1998; Perrett-Clermont, 1980; Vygotsky, 1978;). Perrett-Clermont (1980) illustrated the importance of students sharing and debating information in a safe, no-fault group setting:

> Social cognitive conflict may be figuratively likened to the catalyst in a chemical reaction: it is not present at all the final product, but it is nevertheless indispensable if the reaction is to take place (p. 178).

Students need others' thoughts and opinions to bounce off their own. Otherwise, their only input is their own. Other opinions and contributions need not necessarily end up changing opinions. They may, in fact, serve to create a more solid stance.

Among the background knowledge that is important to understand through the read aloud is the perspective from which the author comes to the story (Manning, 1998; Trelease, 1982). Children like to feel a connection with the adults in their lives. Knowing that they have background experience in common with the author of the book that they are hearing will create a bond which will serve to create memory connection and form foundation schemata

Intent or purpose of reading should always be presented to students before proceeding with the text reading. In order to cue listening comprehension, students need to know what the emphasis of the lesson is so that they can know the treasure when they find it (Morrow, 1989; Mosenthal, 1989). Morrow (1989) advises:

> If the immediate intent is to teach or test sequence, ...instruct the child to concentrate on what happened first, second, and so on. If the goal is to teach or assess ability to integrate information and make references from text, instruct the child to refer to personal feelings or experiences related to the text (p. 42).

Questions and Comments During Reading

Students of every age need to be involved in constructing their own understanding/comprehension. The role of the teacher needs to be one of facilitator in bringing the child to that level and open to the opportunity for constructing his own comprehension. To accomplish that goal, students need to reflect on and question past schema which they have adopted.

> Allow time for class and home discussion (before, during, and) after reading a story. Thoughts, hopes, fears, and discoveries are aroused by a book. Do not turn discussions into quizzes or insist upon prying story interpretations from the child (Trelease, 1982).

Sharing response to story is an important event; important because the act of meaning and needing to find and apply meaning is a social act (Halliday, 1977). The questions, answers, and comments revealed before, during, and after book talk serve to supplement thought and construction of background knowledge for the individuals within the listening group. While the view that the listener has may change, the change takes place as a result of his own constructive processes and "represents his own model of social reality" (Halliday, 1977, p. 139).

A directed series of questions is a tool which the reader may use to foster comprehension and thinking skills on the part of the listener. Beck, et. al., (1997), Chambers (1996), Lapp and Flood (1992), and Ruddell (1974) each have prescribed questions, all of which essentially serve to bring a listener's attention to the text information and focus on facts, mood and genre. Ruddell (1974) specifically outlines types of questions:

1. Extending, which obtains more information at a given level ("What other information do we need about the hero?").
2. Focusing, which initiates or re-focuses a discussion ("What did you like best about the story?").

3. Clarifying, which obtains a more adequate explanation or draws out a student ("Would you explain what you mean?").
4. Raising, which moves a discussion from a factual to an interpretive, inferential, abstraction or generalization level ("We now have enough examples. What do they have in common?") (pp. 400-402).

The activities which occur during the reading are as important as the events which happen during the pre-reading activities. It is during the course of the reading that children are able to remember the important details that were revealed for them to listen for. Engaging in retelling during and following text processing helps children to plan actively, to organize, and to deploy their processing capacities more effectively (Morrow, 1989, p. 40). This sets listeners up to be attuned to information they know is coming, and they anxiously await its revelation.

Student Interaction and Contribution

In the course of book talk, students will likely want to contribute personal background knowledge which they have experienced or heard. This is important because children construct meaning from their own experiences. If children are appropriately primed to activate listening comprehension, they don't passively allow the information to flow in through one ear and out the other. The group dynamics will produce information that is tantamount to the KWL method of preparing for informational text (Stauffer, 1969). It is the cumulative background of the individuals within the group that creates the dynamic of collective experiences, language facility, interests and needs (Stauffer, 1969, p.

34). The collective mind creates a larger database. Knowledge, and subsequently listening, increases as listeners interact and exchange ideas with one another (Chambers, 1996; Gavelek & Raphael, 1998).

Simply reading to children is no guarantee that they will gain anything other than the comfort and company of the reader. It is the interaction with that reader that causes growth in story structure and listening comprehension.

> What happens before, during, and after that reading, how the child participates in the event, and the style in which the story is read all seem to play important roles in children's literacy development (Morrow, 1989, p. 38).

The sharing of background information has the effect of bringing all students at the read aloud up to a fairly level playing field. Peer interaction and involvement serves to improve story comprehension and retelling ability (Pelligrini & Galda, 1982).

Retellings are defined by Morrow (1989) as post-reading or post-listening recalls in which readers or listeners tell what they remember either orally or in writing. This review technique has been determined by Johnson (1983) as "the most straightforward assessment...of the result of reader-text interaction"(p. 54). Using this technique, the teacher is able to assess the efficacy of the book talk, review weak spots in the presentation, and target the specific needs of the group and its individuals. The students themselves are the engine that drives the teaching and therefore the construction of knowledge. The teacher is merely tour guide/navigator.

The language that children use during retell tends to reflect language contained within the book (Morrow, 1989).

> As children become accustomed to book language, they become more able to comprehend the language of other books when they read them for the first time. They also increase their vocabularies and enhance the syntactic complexity of their own oral language by modeling the structures used by the authors (Morrow, 1989, p. 50).

Also evidenced through retelling via student interaction and contribution is the complexity of comprehension of the story that students are experiencing. An effective book talk will have cued as many target purposes as possible, cueing students in to important points to be on the lookout for. Through their interactions and contributions, students reveal the effectiveness of the initial book talk. Through retelling, children

> ...reveal their ability to make inferences as they organize, integrate, and classify information that is implied but not expressed in the story (Morrow, 1989, p. 51).

Retelling, bolstered by an initial pre-reading exercise initiated by book talk, can result in an increase in the development of comprehension, a sense of story structure, and oral complexity in a child's use of language (Morrow, 1989). Enabling a student to experience success with a prepared agenda by way of book talk is a more stable method than merely reading a book without any preparation whatsoever. Book talk gives their memory--and therefore prior knowledge--something to cling to.

Theatrics and Props

One of the primary learning methods for children is imitation (Cazden, 1972). It is for this reason that a reader needs to demonstrate verbally how the words should sound for the young listener. The beginning reader needs to hear that the words on a page are read with expression and with the proper "voice" to be its most effective (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Trelease, 1995).

The memory influences of techniques such as voice characterization, mood music, and props, create dramatic connection between reader and listeners. The drama involved in book talks that contain these elements seals the bond between the participants--both the person reading and his listeners (Keane, 1999).

Toward that end, Keane's (1999) research gives strong recommendation to "give dramatic readings and oral interpretations of passages from books...start with a little bit of a setup, read from the book, and then close with a teaser" (p. 1). Note that not *all* books that are used as read aloud titles need to have extensive preparation or background set-up. Only books that are lengthy or specifically relevant to classroom curriculum need be presented in the more involved manner dictated by book talk format.

The book talk portion of the read aloud is an opportunity for the person reading to practice some of the commercial techniques prescribed by the Madison Avenue guidelines (Morrow, 1989):

> Be expressive while retelling the story, changing your voice and facial expressions to reflect dialogue spoken by different characters and to highlight special

events...Retell slowly and with animation, but not so dramatically as to overshadow the story...retelling enables you to shorten stories to accommodate the attention span of your audience (p. 47).

The key in this situation is that the reader needs to know his audience or to feel comfortable enough with them to take a chance at reading a piece of writing which might not be in their "normal" listening repertoire. However, by dramatizing it, using real or imaginary props, etc., the reader creates a visual/audio image that imprints upon the memory and becomes a significant bit of prior/background knowledge.

Trelease (1982) has found through his research that there are several factors that influence the listening reception of students participating in read aloud sessions:

1) Use plenty of expression when reading. If possible, change your tone of voice to fit the dialog.

2) Adjust your pace to fit the story. During a suspenseful part, slow down, draw your words out, bring listeners to the edge of their chairs.

3) Read slowly enough for the child to build mental pictures of what he just heard you read. Slow down enough for the children to see the pictures in the book without feeling hurried. Reading quickly allows no time for the reader to use vocal expression.

4) Add a third dimension to the book whenever possible. For example: have a bowl of blueberries ready to be eaten during or after the reading of Robert McCloskey's *Blueberries for Sal* (p. 67).

Summary

A great deal of the listening comprehension that is perceived by the student is dependent upon the reading comprehension of the reader. Reading involves qualities of language beyond the direct, specific meanings denoted by words (Cunningham et al., 1983). This implies that the person reading needs to be familiar with and comprehend the text before it is presented at a read aloud session. It also presents the reader with the responsibility to create a pre-reading atmosphere that is conducive to memory retention. These memories may be cued by drama, props, background information, questions asked of the listener, and/or review of previous read aloud experiences.

Because students at the first grade level are primarily dependent on verbal comprehension (rather than written comprehension), instructors need to tailor their presentation and curriculum with a strong emphasis toward an oral style. Toward that end, the purpose of the research was to investigate the most effective methods for cueing listening comprehension for beginning readers.

Chapter 3

Methods

Introduction

Research literature on the subject of early-education reading instruction indicates that read aloud is the primary means through which students are best introduced to the exercise of independent reading. Further research points to the importance of specifically directed instruction in listening practices.

This study was undertaken on the theory that deliberately-included facts and statements related to a story being presented, along with visual cues delivered in the course of a pre-story book talk, will magnify the listening comprehension of beginning readers, thus increasing the potential for fuller story absorption. Among the proponents of this practice, Trelease (1993) tells us that the importance of human contact with the author and the story behind the story is an important aspect of book introduction. "Whenever possible, provide background information about the story and its author. For all the young reader might know, the book was written by a machine" (p. xiii).

The Null Hypothesis is that there will be no significant evidence of change in the listening comprehension of first grade students as a result of delivering pre-reading book talks before read aloud activities.

Subjects in the Study

Kit Carson Elementary School is a two-story neighborhood campus located in the Linda Vista area of San Diego, California. The community is composed of single- and multi-family dwellings. Part of the San Diego Unified School District (which has an average daily attendance of 126,506), Carson Elementary was constructed in 1941 to serve the needs of the children of defense industry workers. Since that time, the population makeup has changed dramatically, especially during the last decade when a heavy influx of Indochinese moved into Linda Vista. The school's population currently numbers 770 with a variety of ethnic groups represented. The ethnic composition is 43.9% Hispanic; 16.6% Indochinese; 16.2% African-American; 14.4% White; 4.9% Filipino; 1.7% Asian; 1.4% Pacific Islander; and 0.9% Native American. Fifty-three percent of the students at Carson Elementary receive instruction as students with limited proficiency in English. There are 642 students receiving free or reduced lunch. Single-parent families and the transient nature of the community contribute to low stability for students enrollment. Last year, 75.5 % of the students remained enrolled for the duration of the school year. The district elementary school average is 84.7%.

Students in this study were enrolled in a regular first grade class at Carson Elementary in the school year 1998-99. The class ethnic makeup was 35% Hispanic; 30% White; 25% African-American; 5% Indochinese; and 5% Asian.

The classroom teacher was requested to designate six students (from the population of twenty) to be included in the study. The researcher required that two

students each from reading level--low, middle, and high--be included in the six selected. Additionally, an even number of boys and girls was needed for participation. The resulting sample consisted of 33% African American; 33% Hispanic; 17% White; and 17% Indochinese. All students within the classroom heard the stories and participated in any discussion that occurred resulting from those readings. However, only those students selected to be used in the study assessment were interviewed.

Materials

In addition to the assessment instrument administered following each read aloud (see Appendix A), materials consisted of a collection of picture books (see Appendix B), none more than 32 pages long. Titles presented as read alouds were obtained from The ReadingTeacher (1997 & 1998) Primary (K-2, ages 5-8) Teacher's Choice lists of the International Reading Association. The classroom teacher accompanied the researcher in the review and purchase of the titles and rejected certain titles not chosen on the basis of difficulty and age-appropriateness. The majority of the chosen titles were included because of the possible reference connections that could be made from one reading experience to another.

Assessment Instrument

A follow-up assessment (see Appendix A) for assessing listening comprehension was administered to the six investigation subjects. The assessment was unique for each of the read aloud titles. Each assessment consisted of two vocabulary questions (with the

target vocabulary word embedded in the sentence used in the book as a reminding aid), two literal questions (information given within the book text/picture), and two inferential questions (where personal/vicarious prior knowledge would be necessary to speculate an opinion).

Procedures

The study called for six students from a first grade class to respond to prompts and inquiries corresponding to information contained within the read aloud selection. The student collection contained two teacher-identified students from each of the reading levels: low, middle, and high ability . Each level contained a boy and a girl, and no level contained members of the same ethnic group.

Initially, the classroom teacher was designated to read the selections. After an initial reading, however, the researcher realized that she needed to do the reading so that the parameters of the investigation could be strictly followed.

The class (which included the sample group) was read aloud to over a period of two weeks. These sessions occurred in the morning after attendance and announcement matters were completed. Sessions for the exclusively read aloud titles lasted from 15 to 20 minutes. Sessions which included book talks extended to the 30 minute range.

Students in the class were instructed to ask no questions during the reading of the first three session titles. Nor was there any introductory or lead-in information to these stories. For the first three titles (see Appendix B), the experience was strictly reading the text with minimal emphasis on emotion or facts contained within the story. This was a

difficult task for these students as they were accustomed to participating in partner-talk and other methods traditionally observed in more reflective read aloud practice. Students did, however, comply with the researcher's request.

The climate during the book talk-accompanied read aloud was much different. Each book was preceded with an introduction to the book cover, a short review of who the author was and what prompted the writing of the book, and a preview of what the book was about. Emphasis was placed on the target words (as indicated on the assessment, see Appendix A), and information that would be requested on the literal questions portion of the assessment. During the reading of the text, pictures were discussed and questions and comment contributions from the group were attended. Character voices and props were also used to emphasize and exaggerate the story for the purpose of the study.

After the reading, each of the subjects was called to the back of the classroom, away from the hearing range of the rest of the class, to complete the assessment. The researcher read each question aloud, made clarification if necessary, and allowed time, as needed, for thoughtful response by assessment participants. Responses to questions were hand-recorded by researcher on a copy of the assessment, as well as captured on audio tape. If a subject was unable to comprehend the question as presented, the prompt was re-worded for clarification. Occasionally, investigation subjects were asked to augment their answers for specific examples.

Data Analysis

Each read aloud session was concluded by having the individual students participate in a post-assessment. This resulted in six assessments for each of the six research titles. A practice assessment was administered during the first title (see Appendix B) but not included in the calculations for the analysis. Questions were categorized into different levels on a rubric to distinguish depth of comprehension (see Appendix C) as determined by the subject's response. Each test was scored accordingly with a possible score of 30 points (six questions, maximum scoring of five points for each question) on each of the title assessments.

Using Microsoft Excel 5.0, raw data for each of the student subjects was calculated for control- and treatment-condition sums. From these totals, mean, standard error, standard deviation, sample variance, and confidence level statistics were obtained (see Table 2). These statistics allowed the researcher to evaluate the validity of the Null Hypothesis and determine the efficacy of the research strategy with regard to individual student subjects.

These same calculations were applied to the six subjects as a group for each of the six research condition titles. Comparisons between control- and treatment conditions of the six stories again were made against the Null Hypothesis (see Table 3).

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

It is known that people feel more comfortable and accepting of information when they are familiar with the subject being presented. It was the intent of this study to assess whether this attitude would affect the listening reception of information contained within read aloud selections. To that end, a total of six read alouds was given to a class of first graders; three of those titles were read without any pre-talk at all, and the remaining three were prefaced with extensive book talk and props/character voice. A rubric was developed to assess the responses obtained from each of the students in the sample (Appendix C). Assessments were reviewed/scored on three separate occasions to ensure validity and then assigned a final score.

Do book talks with pre-talk raise the listening comprehension of first grade students when compared to read alouds presented without any pre-talk whatsoever? With the exception of one sample student (see Table 2), the scores displayed in this investigation support that theory.

Table 2. Mean scores of individual students

	St. #1	St. #2	St. #3	St. #4	St. #5	St. #6
Control	12.33	16.67	6.33	16.00	17.30	1.00
Treatment	16.00	27.67	5.33	22.00	27.00	7.00
Gain in mean score	+3.67	+11.00	-1.00	+6.00	+9.70	+6.00

Research Findings

Table 2 displays mean scores of individual students. Included in Table 3 are mean scores based on all assessments in each group, standard deviation, and t-test results of independent samples.

Table 3. T-test of independent samples

	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	p-value
Control conditions	6	34.83	19.83	$p > .00$
Treatment conditions	6	52.50	29.22	

The mean amount of improvement, while it could have been expected to improve overall, merely from practice and familiarity with the assessment procedure, actually increased more than 50 percent over the course of the research period (from a control mean of 34.83 to a treatment mean of 52.5, a difference of 17.67). Standard deviation of both methods clustered around low scores, indicating a consistency of responses among participants.

Using a significance level of $p < .05$, the resulting probability was $p < .00$. Because the computed t-value of the results (2.18) is larger than the critical value (2.015), the null hypothesis can be discounted.

Table 4 shows the frequency with which the first and second highest mean scores evidenced themselves across the range of answer styles. For example, under the control conditions, vocabulary was not an answer style that was answered with the highest or second highest mean score. When tested under the treatment conditions, however, vocabulary was the top mean score twice and the second highest mean score on one occasion.

Table 4. Frequency of answer style; first and second top scores

	#1 Answers	#2 Answers
Control		
Vocabulary	0	0
Literal	2	2
Inferential	1	1
Treatment		
Vocabulary	2	1
Literal	1	1
Inferential	1	2

Chapter 5

Conclusions

Introduction

Reading aloud to beginning readers at the first grade level is best accomplished by introducing background knowledge of the story and subject matter woven into an introduction of the story frame. This study was undertaken to determine the extent of benefit of such practice.

Research Conclusions

A review of Table 3 indicates significant evidence ($p > .00$) that triggering and/or planting background knowledge prior to read aloud activities increases listening comprehension in first grade students. This statement was true for all but one student (the results of which actually showed a loss).

It is unclear why this student exhibited a loss of comprehension. This student was one of the two students in the sample whose reading skills were indicated by the regular classroom teacher as being 'low'. While the other student who was also assigned the reading ability designations of 'low' improved with the training, this student may, in fact, suffer from a listening comprehension disability. Should this prove the case, this strategy for listening comprehension support may have multi-pronged purpose in helping to identify such students.

These results are consistent with studies testing a similar hypothesis (Erway, 1972; Thompson, 1995). A knowledge of, or presentation of information pertinent to the story topic, provides schema and supports listening comprehension.

Students who have functioning background knowledge of story topic are at an advantage over students who have not had similar experiences or exposure. Educators realize this, and the United States Department of Education has made programs such as Head Start a priority for preschool-aged children for that very reason.

In reviewing this study, and in reviewing the supporting research, I have concluded that changes in the approach and execution are in order to effect an even greater increase in benefit. These proposed changes are reviewed in both the section entitled Limitations of the Study and Implications for the Classroom.

Read Aloud Methods and Circumstances

Literacy has become a major issue in our schools. We promote students to the next grade level even though their performance in reading is not on par with grade level. What this accomplishes is the creation of a downward spiral of frustration in students from which they may never recover. The beginning of this trend for frustration may be the method which teachers use to introduce and present beginning reading materials. Often, teachers begin reading a book without providing background on the book, its author, or the circumstances under which it was written. To a beginning reader, some of whom have very limited background in reading experience of any kind, this is akin to being dropped in the middle of a foreign country and being told to acclimate to the culture

immediately. There is no preparation, and therefore no point of reference from which to merge and blend.

At the start of the 1998-1999 school year, the San Diego Unified School District instituted a read aloud policy similar to the program described in this study. I chose to specifically include props and character talk during my book talks. I also tried to include interesting facts about the author that led to the writing of the book.

By providing the pre-training on the book talk titles, I wanted students to understand that familiarity creates a connection. I wanted to show that lending some sort of familiarity with a book would open a door to its contents rather than just doing a cold reading of a book that was unfamiliar to them.

The first three titles were read with minimal talk and discussion. I had read one story previous to beginning the assessment titles. This was done to familiarize students in the classroom with my voice, manner, and delivery style. Students were able to ask me questions about who I was and get to know something about me. I tried to keep discussions during the first three titles of the assessment to a minimum so that my results were not skewed.

Benefits and Advantages of Pre-Read Aloud Book Talk

Providing book talks before read aloud has been shown to be an effective practice. This is no different than situations where children are told that they are going somewhere and the immediate questioning starts--'Where are we going? What are we going to do? Who are we going to see?' Children (as well as adults) have a strong curiosity about where

they are going and a strong inclination to reflect on the new experience with those that they have already had. Reflecting on the mean scores improvement--with even the lowest scoring student ranging his raw score from 0 to 11, and the highest achieving student ranging from 14 to 28--listening comprehension was dramatically affected by the presence and increase in background information provided prior to and in the course of the storytelling.

The initial three titles used during this investigation proved somewhat tedious for the students. Though I knew the content of each book and was excited about what a wonderful production each was--both literally and graphically--the students were not privy to this knowledge because they didn't have the advantage of preview that I had experienced. I was able to review the pictures and graphics and read and re-read the story several times before a final reading, after having prepared myself for the best means of story delivery. Because I had the advantage of being able to do this preview, I could enjoy the book from several different vantages. The students didn't have that advantage. The pages were shown for a sufficient amount of time as the words were read, but then the pages were turned and the images were gone. They weren't able to preview the pages and anticipate or predict what the author and/or illustrator was portraying.

The behavior of the students during the treatment condition read aloud was much different from that of their behavior during control condition read aloud. Students were much less fidgety and distracted and seemed to be more focused during the treatment condition titles readings. Their eye contact and general posture indicated that their

attention was with the words being read, and the props and gestures that I supplied that augmented the story to aid in their understanding. Occasionally, students would nod their heads in recognition of a previously discussed incident or revelation. The students were attuned to the events leading up to the story's conclusions and showed interest and excitement about what the final outcome might be. Gasps came from some students at the conclusion of the story and students turned to one another to show that they had "known" what was going to happen or to stare in wonder at the unexpected outcome. The students had become a part of the story because they came to know it before they heard it. Movie and television shows work on the same premise. Have the viewer become familiar with the story and they will come to feel that they are a part of it and need to know the conclusion. This is what we need to do with books for our students. Providing the advantage of background knowledge satisfied that need to at least some extent.

The analysis of the difficulty of the different kinds of questions (vocabulary, literal, and inferential) (Table 4) was surprising in that most students were able to answer the inferential questions. Though there were some students who were not able to respond at all (earning a score of 0 on this style of question), others were able to earn scores of 4 and 5, especially after book talks were incorporated.

Implications for Students with Minimal Book Experience

In the classroom where this investigation took place, the students were already familiar with the practice of book talk. This is not, however, the case with all first grade beginning readers. Children's first experiences with speech and language are through

spoken word. Beginning readers are still very much dependent upon being read to for the information that they need to build skills toward becoming independent readers. In the first grade classroom, much of that information is gained through read aloud.

Limitations of the Study

Background Assessment of Prior Knowledge

This study was limited in the investigation of the actual background knowledge of the individual subjects prior to the book presentation. In order to fully disclose the efficacy of this investigation, an assessment of the students' schema would have revealed the extent of in-place background experience on the topics read about. Dietz, Daugherty, and Hodrinsky (1988) state that "a child's comprehension can be enhanced when the frame of the story and that of the child are analyzed and sensitively mediated" (p.11).

Constraints of Time

I found that time was a factor that I had to fight all the time. Because my test group was the class of a colleague, I was bound to the schedule of that class. The classroom teacher was under a tight schedule and was able to offer a limited time for me to accomplish my goals. While I needed to respect those restrictions, I was sometimes rushed and unable to embellish my book talks as much as I would had I had more freedom of the clock. Had the class been mine, I would have been able to adjust other subjects on my agenda to accommodate a comfortable pace for the read aloud sessions. As it was, I needed to respect the parameters set upon me by the classroom teacher.

Assessment Environment

The de-briefing of students would have been better accomplished in a quieter environment. Circumstances necessitated my I borrowing the desk of one of the students, displacing him. On occasion, during debriefing of one of the study subjects, this student would need materials from his desk, disturbing the continuity of the assessment. Arrangements for a spot out of the way would have made for a more suitable debriefing environment for the surrounding students, the subject student, and myself.

Also, because I was using a tape-recording to help with documentation, I found it necessary to make an issue of having students hold the microphone right up to their mouths. Though they became accustomed to it by the end of the six sessions, its presence presented some hesitancy in response. I had, however, used the tape recorder during the first trial title and that did serve to pass over the novelty of it somewhat.

Implications for the Classroom

Incorporation of Book Talk into the Curriculum

The method used in the course of this investigation is one of the many techniques possible to supplement and support the read aloud experience. This investigation used teacher-directed presentation of author and story information. During the introductory section of the book talk read aloud, the author/illustrator was introduced and information relative to their contributions were revealed to the students. Information (including vocabulary and facts from the text) that was pertinent to the story was told directly to

the students before the read aloud so that they had a first contact with important facts. From this method alone, significant performance improvements were attained.

Benefit of Pre- and Post Talk

Merely reviewing the book prior to reading it is not the only method for holding read aloud. Discussion during and after read aloud is also valuable. Once students are confident with enough information given in a pre-reading book talk, they then become empowered to augment that information with further information gained through the read aloud itself. This collection of information becomes a storehouse from which conversation and personal connection may branch. When students have this reservoir on which to draw, discussion will produce more information and reflection.

The need to manage and direct the book talk for students at the beginning of their participation in them is obvious. The preliminary discussions are likely to stray and become muddled in trivia and pulled off course unless there is some directed vision to guide it. However, once students become familiar with story language and structure, students even at the first grade level are able to have the reins loosened and be allowed to regroup into small discussion circles to explore the story at deeper levels.

Incorporating Drama and Dramatics Within the Book Talk

From their earliest days of childhood, drama and imitation have played an important part in the lives of first-grade age children. Children use play to explore their role and place, the place of important members of their family and society, and to re-create events and places in their lives. Through the kernel provided by the book talk to

spur memory and comprehension, drama can lend aid for listening comprehension memory. Through dramatization, thoughts and memory of the piece of literature presented as read aloud may be reviewed. This technique was used during assessment sessions (see Appendix D).

Individuals Come With Unique Experiences

Students come to the classroom with background unique to themselves. Each has his own set of experiences and memories. Garner (1987) discusses a study wherein it was revealed that "subjects' knowledge and interests affect both textual information recall and ... intrusions in protocols" (p. 6). Listeners/beginning readers bring general impressions, rather than detailed information to the fore in the course of memory recall toward applying memory.

Reading aloud, especially for pre-independent readers, familiarizes student with vocabulary that probably is not yet in place in the personal lexicon of the student. Vocabulary knowledge, as with general knowledge and experiences, is also schema-based. Experiences are stacked and stored in an individuals memory based on what is already in place. Therefore, the comprehension of additional vocabulary is dependent upon the schematic knowledge already set by previous experience and exposure.

This phenomenon is not exclusive to the acquisition of vocabulary. This memory schema is influenced by the listener's experiences and perspectives--home and life experiences and stances. All of these factors contribute to the degree to which new information will be adopted and acclimated.

Read Aloud As Structure for Story Grammar Schema

Inexperienced listeners may not have developed a reliable story grammar. They may be unfamiliar with the elements of story and therefore unprepared for the separate parts of a story as it is presented. Comprehension can thus be sporadic and disjointed. Garner (1987) suggests that "a (story) grammar seems to provide the basis for retrieval of information from a story" (p. 9).

Setting and Activating Prior Knowledge and Experience

The advantage of presenting background knowledge to beginning readers is that it either 1) activates prior knowledge already in place and enables that to incorporate the new information resulting in a fuller, firmer, cleaner understanding or 2) it lays the foundation for the initialization of comprehension of the subject material presented in the read aloud.

The goal of book talk is to activate the prior knowledge already in place, to supplement it with additional information, and to supplement the background of the listener with a foundation of general information on which comprehension may begin to structure.

Knowing that background and prior experience influences comprehension, the books used for the study might have been used as the basis for further investigation by the class toward a unit on that subject, rather than as isolated introduction.

This researcher believes that students must be guided to the realization that (listening) comprehension isn't a reflection of their intelligence or how "smart" they are,

but rather is an indicator of their exposure to experience and exploration. Read aloud accompanied by orchestrated book talk serves to bolster that exposure and experience and lends schema to a child's "smartness." That, in turn, will encourage him to want to add to that schema.

Questions for Future Research

This study was conducted in the second semester of a first grade classroom. Had the study been conducted in the beginning of the first semester, and again toward the end of the second semester, would students have solidly adapted their listening habits and questioning skills as a result of their first semester experiences?

What effect would an extensive study from a basal level have on the listening comprehension of a study topic? That is, having a specific trade book as an end goal with maximum comprehension the desired effect, how much more effect would extensive background have on building schema toward that goal?

Using upper grade tutors is effective in boosting the reading ability of the tutors. Could we expect a reciprocal benefit for the younger listener's comprehension levels? Is there a mutual support built into this tutoring practice that will encourage increased metacognition in the beginning reader?

Teachers are encouraged to incorporate read aloud adults from the community--including secretaries, custodians, mailmen, the principal, etc. Is their inclusion, and the excitement that surrounds their novelty, a bonus to the intent of fostering background

knowledge? Are students more apt to attend to the discussion initiated by a visitor than by the regular classroom teacher?

How important are the connections derived from first-hand experiences? Field trips or out-of-class experiences could be used to supplement knowledge revealed in read aloud. Further study might investigate the effect on listening comprehension that such activities would have.

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Appendix A

Assessment Instrument Keys and Booktalks of Control and Treatment Sessions

Student # KEY
Date: 3/18/99

Student Reading Level: L / M / H
Reading Method: RA / BT

Look to the North; A Wolf Pup Diary
By Jean Craighead George
Illustrated by Lucia Washburn

Vocabulary Questions

posse- "Scree and Talus follow Boulder around berries and over wildflower seeds. They run in a knot, never bumping. They leap as one. They chase birds in a posse."

A group of people gathered by a sheriff to help him or her capture a criminal

gypsies- "Boulder, Scree, and Talus follow their father and mother and the baby-sitter into the valley. They are gypsies."

Gypsies are a wandering people, and they now live scattered throughout the world.

Literal Questions:

1. How well could the wolf pups see and hear when they were born?

"Boulder, Scree, and Talas arrive. They are blind and deaf."

2. How do wolves let others know that they don't want to fight or play anymore and that the other wolf wins?

"Boulder grabs Scree by the back of her neck and shakes hard. She yelps piteously, then grabs Boulder's neck. He breaks loose. Suddenly, Scree rolls to her back, flashing her pale belly fur. This is the wolves' white flag of surrender. Boulder has won."

Inferential Questions:

1. Why did the pups pretend-fight so much when they were very young?

They need to decide what job they would have when they got older.

2. (a)What does it mean, "All three can show their teeth to say, 'Hey, watch it.' (b) And all three can smile both with their mouths and their tails"?

(a) The three young wolves can show that they are not happy by showing their teeth ("grr!"). (b)They can also "smile" with their mouths (tongue hanging out) and by wagging their tails to show how happy they are.

Student # KEY
Date: 3/19/99

Student Reading Level: L / M / H
Reading Method: RA / BT

The Blue and the Gray
Story by Eve Bunting
Illustrated by Ned Bittinger

Vocabulary Questions

catwalk- "Tall ladders lean against the houses, cross between, like catwalks."
"A narrow walk (as along a bridge)."

musket- "Their red flags tossed and flamed like fire. The barrels of their muskets hard and black gave back the dazzle of the sun."
"A gun with a long barrel like a rifle. It was used in warfare before modern rifles were invented."

Literal Questions:

1. What did the boy find in the gravel where the builders had dug?
"I lift a piece of gravel that is lying close to where the builders dig. It's shaped just like a pigeon's egg, more pointed, flattened on one side. Is it a bullet? A hundred years and more it's lain here. I'll keep it for a souvenir."

2. What happened in the field more than 100 years ago?
"In 1862 this was a battlefield, and here two armies fought and soaked the grass with blood. I guess the flowers were read instead of white that night."

Inferential Questions:

1. What did the father mean when he said "*We'll* be a monument of sorts, a part of what they fought for long ago."?
The story of what happened will never die as long as there are people who can remember and tell of the lives that were lost as the result of the terrible battle. As long as the story is told, the lives will not have been spent for nothing.

2. Why did the boy toss what he thought was a bullet into the field of bones?
He wanted it to remain in the field as a monument--a memorial--to remind whoever might find it, of the day the white flowers were stained red.

Student # KEY
Date: 3/22/99

Student Reading Level: L / M / H
Reading Method: RA / BT

The Gardener
Story by Sarah Stewart
Illustrated by David Small

Vocabulary Questions

doze - "And, dearest Grandma, Thank you for the seeds. The train is rocking me to sleep, and every time I doze off, I dream of gardens."

"To sleep lightly or for a short time; take a nap."

sprucing - "Emma and I are sprucing up the bakery and I'm playing a great trick on Uncle Jim."

"To make neat and smart in appearance."

Literal Questions:

1. How did Lydia Grace know how to recognize Uncle Jim when she rode the train to stay with him?

"Dear Papa,

I haven't forgotten what you said about recognizing Uncle Jim. (Just look for Mama's face with a big nose and a mustache!'"

2. Where did Lydia Grace go to get the dirt that she used to plant her seeds and flowers?

"And, Grandma, you should smell the good dirt I'm bringing home from the vacant lot down the street."

Inferential Questions:

1. How does Lydia Grace know that Uncle Jim really loves her even though he never smiled?

*Note: These are only suggestions. None is definitive.

- He read her poem out loud, then he put it in his shirt pocket and patted it.
- He baked a cake and decorated it by covering it with flowers (Lydia Grace's favorite things).
- Any other validated, logical reason. MUST BE BASED ON *LISTENING* TO THE STORY!!!

2. Why did Lydia Grace go to live with Uncle Jim?
Papa lost his job and Mama wasn't getting any more dress orders. Uncle Jim had his bakery and could help support Lydia Grace if she helped him. In a situation where lack of money had become a problem, this was the best solution until Papa and Mama could afford to better provide for their family.

Student # KEY
Date: 3/23/99

Student Reading Level: L / M / H
Reading Method: RA / BT

Granddaddy'sGift
Story by Margaree King Mitchell
Illustrated by Larry Johnson

Vocabulary Questions

segregation - "He told us that many years ago, segregationlaws had been passed in the South to keep black people from having the same rights as white people, like the right to vote."

"The practice of setting on racial group apart from another. There are laws against *segregation* of black and white children in the public schools."

register - "Granddaddy went into one of the offices and told the lady behind the counter that he wanted to register to vote."

"To vote one's name is placed on a list or record. Voters must *register* before they can vote."

Literal Questions:

1. How far in school was Granddaddy able to go? At what grade did he have to stop?

Eighthgrade.

2. What kind of a test was Granddaddy required to take to be able to register to vote?

A test on the Mississippi state constitution.

Inferential Questions:

1. Why did the man at the courthouse tell Granddaddy, "Just be satisfied with what you have"?

They could own land, they weren't slaves, their children could go to school to learn to read...

2. Why would someone burn the church the night that Granddaddy had registered to vote?

Because they wanted to scare all the other black people so much that they wouldn't register to vote (as Granddaddy had done).

Student # KEY
Date: 3/24/99

Student Reading Level: L / M / H
Reading Method: RA / BT

Lou Gehrig; the luckiest man
Story by David A. Adler
Illustrated by Terry Widener

Vocabulary Questions

consecutive - "For the next fourteen years Lou Gehrig played in 2,130 consecutive Yankee games."

"Following one after another without a break. The numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are *consecutive* numbers."

salary - "The Yankees offered Lou a $1,500 bonus to sign plus a good salary."

"A fixed amount of money that is paid to someone for work done. It is paid at regular times. That job pays a good *salary*."

Literal Questions:

1. Why didn't Lou's mother want Lou to quit college to join the Yankees?

"Lou's mother was furious. She was convinced that he was ruining his life."

2. What was the weather like on the day of Lou Gehrig's funeral?

"On June 4 the Yankee game was canceled because of rain. Some people thought it was fitting that the Yankess did not play; this was the day of Lou Gehrig's funeral."

Inferential Questions:

1. Why do you think that Lou Gehrig would tell his friends not to worry by saying, "I'll gradually get better."?

Because he really believed that he was lucky; that he was more concerned about other people than he was for himself; he didn't want other people to suffer because of his misfortune.

2. Why did Lou Gehrig consider himself "the luckiest man on the face of the earth?"

"He got to earn a salary doing what he loved most--playing baseball. Many people loved him. The more he gave of himself, the more his fans and the world returned to him."

Student # KEY
Date: 3/25/99

Student Reading Level: L / M / H
Reading Method: RA / BT

Mailing May
Story by Michael O. Tunnell
Illustrated by Ted Rand

Vocabulary Questions

commenced - "Pa and Ma commencedto whispering and peeking at me off and on."

"Begin; to start. The opening ceremonies for the new school *commenced* with everyone saying the Pledge of Allegiance."

poultry - "Well, Leonard, looks like you'll be in charge of some poultry on this mail run."

"Chickens, turkeys, geese, and other birds raised for their eggs or meat."

Literal Questions:

1. What did May try to do to get the money to go visit Grandma Mary?
   She asked Mr. Alexander for a job at his Alexander's Department Store. "I need a job. I need money for the train."

2. What was the most that a package that you wanted to mail could weigh?
   50 pounds. "Sam, you got some new rules for mail packages. I know boxes can weigh up to fifty pounds nowadays."

Inferential Questions:

1. Why didn't Pa and Ma tell May about the trip before she got to the post office?
   They weren't sure that their idea to mail may would be alright with the postmaster.

2. Why do you suppose that Mr. Perkins, the postmaster, allowed May to be mailed and ride on the train?
   Because he understood that May wanted (and maybe even *needed* to go to see Grandma Mary. She would cause no more harm--and maybe even less--than poultry mail would

Booktalk for:

Granddaddy'sGift
Story by Margaree King Mitchell
Illustrated by Larry Johnson

This is the story of how Margaree King Mitchell's grandfather came to be the first Black man to register to vote in Mississippi.

Last week I read a book called The Blue and the Gray. It was about a battle fought almost 150 years ago. The battle was part of the Civil war. The war was fought mostly because some white people who lived in the southern United States insisted that they should be allowed to continue to own black people (as slaves) who had been stolen from Africa.

The people who lived in the South eventually lost the Civil War and had to give up their slaves and let them vote, learn to read, own land, and become United States citizens. The people of the South said, "Okay, black people can be citizens but they have to be citizens in a special way. We are going to have segregation" Segregationis where blacks and whites are supposed to have the same rights but do things separately. Black and white people are kept apart from one another. The white people of the South said, "The black people have to go to their own schools and use books that we don't want anymore. They have to use their own drinking fountains and enter buildings using side or back doors. And, if they want to vote, well...We'll **see** about it!"

Well, here is the California state constitution, boys and girls. By the time that you graduate from high school when you are 18 years old, you will have been in school to learn what is in this Constitution. You will have many years to learn what it says and what your rights and responsibilities are; you will have 12 years of school to learn them.

Granddaddy only went to school through the 8th grade. His daddy **would** have had to send him on to a black children's high school far away but he didn't have enough money. Remember Eleanor who was sent away to school where she had to speak French? Well, the only school available to Granddaddy in those days was kind of like the boarding school that Eleanor went to, except it wasn't a rich school. But it was far away and it wasn't free, unlike the school for the white children.

So, Granddaddy stayed and worked very hard in the fields and saved his money. Little by little, with the money he slowly earned, Granddaddy bought land for his own farm. He also bought books so that he could learn after he'd worked all day on the farm.

Granddaddy learned a lot. Even though he only finished through the 8th grade, he'd made sure that he read and studied on his own. It was hard to learn and he wanted better for his children and grandchildren. He knew that staying in school was important for them to be able to choose what they wanted to do. Otherwise, they would have to stay and work on the farm because they wouldn't know how to do anything else.

Because he had studied and paid attention, Granddaddy knew a lot about the state of Mississippi and he knew that not being allowed to vote was **wrong**! So, he volunteered to be the first black man in Mississippi to register to vote. When you **register** for something, you're letting people know that you're interested in what they have to offer. Just like you would register to win a car or a contest by writing down your name and address on a card, when you turn 18, you can register to vote. But it wasn't always so easy for black Americans.

Trying to register was a dangerous thing for Granddaddy to do. Granddaddy had trouble! Lots of trouble!

Let's read to find out what Granddaddy did and see if we can discover what Granddaddy's gift was.

Booktalk for:

Lou Gehrig; the luckiest man
Story by David A. Adler
Illustrated by Terry Widener

This is the story of how the son of German immigrants wove his life into the hearts of the world and how his memory will lovingly live on forever.

The story was written by a devoted Yankees fan who can often be found during late spring and summer in the bleachers of Yankee Stadium. He has written over 100 books

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Lou Gehrig is a man whose name brings to mind many things. People think of bravery when they think of him. They think of kind and unselfish. They definitely think of baseball. And they also think of Lou Gehrig's disease or ALS--amyotrophic lateral sclerosis--which is named after him.

Lou Gehrig was born in 1903, the same year that the first World Series baseball games were played. He was born in a neighborhood in New York City. His parents were Heinrich and Christina Gehrig. They came to the United States from Germany.

Lou's mother wanted him to study hard and go on to college so that he could become an accountant or an engineer. All the way from the time that he was in first grade until he was in the eighth grade (remember, this is the grade the Granddaddy went through), Lou didn't miss a single day of school.

Lou loved sports, even though his mother thought that they were a waste of time. He would get up early before school and play until it was time to go to school. Lou was a star baseball player in high school.

Lou did go on to college, but when a man from the New York Yankees saw him play for the college team, he signed on to play with them so that his family could get money from the salary that he earned. Salary means the money that you get for the work that you do. When you have a job, you usually get paid a regular amount of money which is called a salary.

When Lou stopped going to college, his mother was **angry** at his decision. She thought that the only way that he could ever be successful would be if he continued to go to college. But Lou felt that he needed to provide money for his family.

Once Lou was put in to play for the Yankees, he **never** missed a game for 14 years! He played in 2,130 **consecutive** games. That means that from the time that he started playing games for the Yankees, he played every single game that the team played for the next 2,130 games! **WOW!!!** Can you imagine playing baseball--come rain, shine, snow, hot sun, stomachaches, fevers, a sore arm, back pains, and broken fingers--everything--for 14 years? That's what consecutive means--one right after the other. He played consecutive games just like he never missed a day of school. Is this the third consecutive day that everybody is here in Mr. Anthony's class?

But then, for reasons that he didn't understand, he started having trouble hitting the ball. Then he had trouble catching and throwing the ball. Then, one day he fell down for no apparent reason. What was wrong with Lou Gehrig?

Lou didn't want people to feel sorry for him. He just wanted to play baseball. He was good to people and they were good back to him. Finally he couldn't play anymore, but the people loved him anyway.

Let's read the story and find out just what Lou Gehrig was like that made people love him so and why he called himself "the luckiest man."

Booktalk for:

Mailing May
Story by Michael O. Tunnell
Illustrated by Ted Rand

Michael O. Tunnell learned about May at the National Postal Museum. The story is real. All of the people in the story are real.

May needed to go to see her grandmother. Not that she had to, just that she needed to. Her parents had promised her that she could. But it wasn't so easy. Grandma lived many miles away and those miles were rugged mountain miles that made them even more difficult. It wasn't just a matter of getting in a car like you could do today. If May was going to go visit Grandma Mary, she had to go on the train. Only problem was, the ticket for May would cost $1.55. Her father earned that much in one day and the family needed it for things like food and heat and shelter. Oh, dear...May would never get to see Grandma Mary!

She tried to ask for a job but the department store owner said that she wasn't old enough. Oh, my, she was depressed. Even the piece of candy that she was given wasn't very tasty.

At home that evening, May's Pa and Ma commenced to talking very privately with one another. Commenced means "started" or "began", it's an old-fashioned way of saying that they **started** whispering to one another.

Now, just so that you know about what the story is saying, I want to make sure that you know what the word poultry means. Any suggestions or guesses? Well, **poultry** means chickens, turkeys, geese, and other birds raised for their eggs or meat. Have you ever heard a human mother or teacher refer to children as "chicks"? It's a term that's used lovingly to mean their children. So, while May might not have been a real chick, to her mother and the people that loved her, she was a "chick" in the sense that she was loved and adored.

You may be wondering what May's wanting to go visit her Grandma Mary has to do with poultry. Well, I guess that we'd better read the story so that you can find out! All right, you chicks! Listen up! Let's commencereading Mailing May. Remember? That means "Let's **start**reading!"

Appendix B

Literature Used in Control and Treatment Sessions

Introductory Title

Eleanor
Story and Illustrations by Barbara Cooney

Control Condition Titles

Look to the North; A Wolf Pup Diary
By Jean Craighead George
Illustrated by Lucia Washburn

The Blue and the Gray
By Eve Bunting
Illustrated by Ned Bittinger

The Gardener
By Sarah Stewart
Illustrated by David Small

Treatment Condition Titles

Granddaddy'sGift
by Margaree King Mitchell
Illustrated by Larry Johnson

Lou Gehrig: The Luckiest Man
By David A. Adler
Illustrated by Terry Widener

Mailing May
By Michael O. Tunnell
Illustrated by Ted Rand

Appendix C

Rubric Instruments Used to Score Post-tests of Control and Treatment Sessions

Rubric Instruments Used to Score Listening Comprehension Control and Treatment

Session Post-tests

0 = no attempt

1 = no evidence

2 = comprehension of information confused with information from another part of the story or prior information

3 = weak

4 = good

5 = strong

Appendix D

Assessment Instruments

Full Transcription of

Control and Treatment Session Post-tests

Student # 1 Student Reading Level: Middle
Date: 3/18/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

Look to the North; A Wolf Pup Diary
By Jean Craighead George
Illustrated by Lucia Washburn

Researcher: I'm going to read a sentence and I want you to tell me what the word that's underlined means, okay? (student nods) Scree and Talus follow Boulder around berries and over wildflower seeds. They run in a knot, never bumping. They leap as one. They chase birds in a posse. What does posse mean in this sentence?

Student #1: Ah, it means, um, something like a (pause). It's like a animal.

Researcher: Oh, okay. Actually, you're not far off. It means that it's a gathering that's chasing something. All right? So they're chasing as a group.

Student #1: Okay.

Researcher: Okay. This is the word that I want you to tell me about. Boulder, Scree, and Talus follow their father and mother and the baby-sitter into the valley. They are gypsies.

Student #1: Um, uh, I don't know.

Researcher: I'm going to read what it means. Gypsies are wandering people. In this case, wolves, and they live, scattered throughout the world and they just travel from one place to another. Remember this was in winter and they were just looking for food, so they had to go where the food was. The food didn't come to them.

Researcher: How well could the wolf pups see and hear when they were born?

Student #1: Um, when they got bigger.

Researcher: No, when they were born, how well could they see or hear?

Student #1: Um, I forgot.

Researcher: Okay. How do wolves let others know that they don't want to fight or play anymore and that the other wolf wins?

Student #1: Um, (long pause)

Researcher: Remember when they were play fighting?

Student #1: (pause) they (pause) the other wolf jumped on the other one?

Researcher: Um, hum.. Un huh. Anything else?

Student #1: (student shakes head) Nothing.

Researcher: That's okay. Remember the jump on one another and the one bit the other 'til he shook loose and then Scree turned on her back and showed her white tummy and that was the sign that was saying, "Okay, I quit. You win." Do you remember that part?

Student #1: Yeah.

Researcher: Why did the pups pretend-fight so much when they were very young? Why did they fight outside or pretend to be mad with one another? Why did they do that?

Student #1: Um, 'cause they just wanted to play.

Researcher: Okay. Listen carefully. What does it mean, "All three can show their teeth to say, 'Hey, watch it.'

Student #1: Um, (pause) I forgot.

Researcher: And all three can smile both with their mouths and their tails. What does that mean?

Student #1: They can both smile.

Researcher: Can you tell me some more about that?

Student #1: Yeah, ah, (pause).

Researcher: Can you tell me some more about "all three can smile both with their mouths and their tails?"

Student #1: Um, (pause) they can talk.

Researcher: You mean like you and me?

Student #1: Yeah. Um, (pause) and, they wag their tail.

Researcher: Good. Why do they wag their tail?

Student #1: Um, because dogs do that.

Researcher: Okay. Thank you very much.

Student # 2 Student Reading Level: High
Date: 3/18/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

Look to the North; A Wolf Pup Diary
By Jean Craighead George
Illustrated by Lucia Washburn

Researcher: Hi. Are you ready to remember what you just heard in the story? (Student # 5 nods) Scree and Talus follow Boulder around berries and over wildflower seeds. They run in a knot, never bumping. They leap as one. They chase birds in a posse. What does the word posse mean when it was used in the story?

Student #2: Maybe the name of one of the dogs. Or its a lion.

Researcher: What does this underlined word mean? Boulder, Scree, and Talus follow their father and mother and the baby-sitter into the valley. They are gypsies.

Student #2: Gypsies are like something that dances around or like prances.

Researcher: Okay. All right. How well could the wolf pups see and hear when they were born?

Student #2: Not very well. (pause)

Researcher: Okay. Do you remember how well?

Student #2: Well, like, just a tiny bit.

Researcher: Okay. Actually, when baby wolves are born, they're blind and deaf and they can't hear. Remember I touched my ear?

Student #2: Oh, yeah.

Researcher: Okay. How do wolves let others know that they don't want to fight or play anymore and that the other wolf wins?

Student #2: They, um, put up the white flag.

Researcher: Okay. Do you remember how they do that?

Student #2: They lay on their stomachs.

Researcher: Ah, very good! You were listening! Why did the pups pretend-fight so much when they were very young?

Student #2: Because they want to be um, they want to be, um, like the grown ups and they want to be very, very strong like the grownups.

Researcher: Okay. What does it mean, "All three can show their teeth to say, 'Hey, watch it.' and all three can smile both with their mouths and their tails"?

Student #2: What does it mean?

Researcher: Um, hum.

Student #2: When, well they, well when they, when they show their teeth, it means, "Hey, watch it!" but "Hey, watch it!" means, um, like, "Watch out!"

Researcher: Okay. And what does it mean when we say 'They smile both with their mouths and their tails?'

Student #2: It means (pause), it means they're happy.

Researcher: That was very good thinking. Why do you think that?

Student #2: Because most dogs and um, wolves because when they, when they wag their tails that means they're just happy.

Researcher: Um hum. Thank you very, very much.

Student # 3 Student Reading Level: Low
Date: 3/18/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

Look to the North; A Wolf Pup Diary
By Jean Craighead George
Illustrated by Lucia Washburn

Researcher: This word posse, I want you to tell me what the word means at the end of our talk, okay? (Student nods yes) Scree and Talus follow Boulder around berries and over wildflower seeds. They run in a knot, never bumping. They leap as one. They chase birds in a posse. What does posse mean in the sentence? What does posse mean?

Student #3 (pause) I don't know.

Researcher: Okay. Actually, a posse is a is a group of, in this case, wolves, they were chasing, they were pretend chasing something. Okay. The knew what they wanted to go after and they went as a group. That's what posse means. Okay. What does the word "gypsies" mean? Boulder, Scree, and Talus follow their father and mother and the baby-sitter into the valley. They are gypsies. When we read the story, what did that mean, "gypsies?"

Student #3: (long pause)

Researcher: Any idea? (student shakes head) You want to give me an answer of some sort? It's okay just to say I don't know.

Student #3: I don't know.

Researcher: Okay. See? We needed an answer and 'I don't know' is perfectly acceptable. Okay. How well could the wolf pups see and hear when they were born? Remember that? How well could they see and hear?

Student #3: When they was little, um, the baby wolf was on the mom.

Researcher: Um, hum. The baby wolf was on the mom's...what? Do you want to start over? (student nods) Okay.

Student #3: The baby wolf was on the mom and then the wolf was growed.

Researcher: Okay. Is that all you want to say about that? (student nods) How do wolves let others know that they don't want to fight or play anymore and that the other wolf wins?

Student #3: If the other wolf wins, then the other will win.

Researcher: Okay. Why did the pups pretend-fight so much when they were very young?

Student #3: Because the baby wolf want to get on their mom and bite her on the tail.

Researcher: What does it mean, "All three can show their teeth to say, 'Hey, watch it.' What does that mean?

Student #3: (extra long pause) No, I don't know.

Researcher: Okay. And all three can smile both with their mouths and their tails"? What does that mean?

Student #3: (long pause) No. I don't know.

Researcher: Have you ever seen a dog wag its tail? No? You've never seen a dog wag its tail? Well, I hope you do sometime because that usually means that they're happy. And have you ever seen a dog go (gesture a dog panting)? He looks like he's smiling? That usually means he's happy, too. That or he's really tired.

Student # 4 Student Reading Level: High
Date: 3/18/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

Look to the North; A Wolf Pup Diary
By Jean Craighead George
Illustrated by Lucia Washburn

Researcher: The word "posse" is the word that I want you to help me find a definition for, okay? But I'm going to read you this sentence it was in the book that I just read. Scree and Talus follow Boulder around berries and over wildflower seeds. They run in a knot, never bumping. They leap as one. They chase birds in a posse. Can you tell me what posse means right there?

Student #4: I don't know.

Researcher: It actually means that they're pretending to look for something and so they're all looking for it together. The word I want is "gypsies." Boulder, Scree, and Talus follow their father and mother and the baby-sitter into the valley. They are gypsies. Can you tell me what "gypsies" would mean there?

Student #4: Hungry?

Researcher: They are hungry. Actually, you're pretty close. What it means is they're wandering around. They don't have any home. Remember they had their summer home and their spring home. And then during the winter, they wander around and look for food. That's why they're gypsies. They move around all the time. So, you were pretty close. They were moving around because they were hungry. Right? (student nods) How well could the wolf pups see and hear when they were born?

Student #4: Blind.

Researcher: Okay. And how well could they hear?

Student #4: They could not hear.

Researcher: Could they smell very well? (student shakes head) At all?

Student #4: No.

Researcher: No? You're right! How do wolves let others know that they don't want to fight or play anymore and that the other wolf wins?

Student #4: Put up the flag.

Researcher: Oh, what does that mean?

Student #4: That means the other ones win when they put on the flag.

Researcher: And what does "putting on the flag" mean?

Student #4: That means the wolf wins.

Researcher: Okay. And what do they do when they put up a flag. You mean they go to the flagpole and put it up? (student shakes head) No. What do they do?

Student #4: They say that they win and they don't have to fight any more.

Researcher: Okay. Why did the pups pretend-fight so much when they were very young? Why did they play fighting so much?

Student #4: Because the one that could smell good he was scared and then that's how they started to fight because the one that could smell good he was on the girl's back. The boy went on the girl's back .

Researcher: What does it mean, "All three can show their teeth to say, 'Hey, watch it.' What does that mean?

Student #4: That means that to watch it out or they will bite you.

Researcher: and all three can smile both with their mouths and their tails"? What does that mean? They can smile both with their mouths and their tails.

Student #4: That means be good.

Researcher: That means be good? (student nods) Ever seen a dog wag his tail? (Student nods)

Student #4: That means he doesn't bite.

Researcher: That means he's usually happy at that time, doesn't it? (student nods)

Student # 5 Student Reading Level: Middle
Date: 3/18/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

Look to the North; A Wolf Pup Diary
By Jean Craighead George
Illustrated by Lucia Washburn

Researcher: I'm going to ask you some questions and the first one that I'm going to ask you Scree and Talus follow Boulder around berries and over wildflower seeds. They run in a knot, never bumping. They leap as one. They chase birds in a posse. Posse. What does that word mean?

Student #5: I think it's a hill of flowers.

Researcher: Now the word "gypsies." Listen for that word in this sentence. Boulder, Scree, and Talus follow their father and mother and the baby-sitter into the valley. They are gypsies. What does that word mean?

Student #5: I think it means they're freezing.

Researcher: Okay. How well could the wolf pups see and hear when they were born? Do you remember that?

Student #5: Yes. They couldn't see or hear at all. They were blind.

Researcher: Very good. How do wolves let others know that they don't want to fight or play anymore and that the other wolf wins?

Student #5: Because they show their, um, mean little teeth.

Researcher: Oh. Okay. Why did the pups pretend-fight so much when they were very young? Why did they pretend to fight?

Student #5: (pause) To practice getting their teeth ready to eat things.

Researcher: What does it mean, "All three can show their teeth to say, 'Hey, watch it.' What could that mean?

Student #5: That they don't want to mess around with anybody. That's his way to say, 'Leave me alone.'

Researcher: And what does "and all three can smile both with their mouths and their tails" mean? What is that talking about?

Student #5: They could, like, smile. That they're happy.

Researcher: Have you ever seen a dog wag his tail and look like he's smiling? That usually means that the dog is happy to see you.

Student # 6 Student Reading Level: Low
Date: 3/18/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

Look to the North; A Wolf Pup Diary
By Jean Craighead George
Illustrated by Lucia Washburn

Researcher: There are some words that are underlined and when I get to them, I want you to be sure to remember what they mean. Okay? I'm going to read the first sentence now. Ready? The first word is "posse." Scree and Talus follow Boulder around berries and over wildflower seeds. They run in a knot, never bumping. They leap as one. They chase birds in a posse. The word is posse. What does that word mean in this sentence?

Student #6: It means, (pause) I don't know.

Researcher: Okay. It means chasing something when you're a part of a group. They were practicing hunting with each other. The next word is "gypsies." Boulder, Scree, and Talus follow their father and mother and the baby-sitter into the valley. They are gypsies. Could you please tell me what "gypsies" means here?

Student #6: (long pause) I don't know.

Researcher: Gypsies are people who have no home and wander around. Their home is anywhere they are. In this sentence it means that they had no home at the time. Remember how the wolves had a spring and a summer home? In the winter, they had no home that they stayed in all the time. They needed to keep moving to find food. Okay? How well could the wolf pups see and hear when they were born?

Student #6: (long pause) Don't know.

Researcher: All right. How do wolves let others know that they don't want to fight or play anymore and that the other wolf wins? How do they know when to stop play fighting?

Student #6: (long pause) I don't know.

Researcher: Why did the pups pretend-fight so much when they were very young? Why did they fight with each other?

Student #6: (long pause) I don't know.

Researcher: What does it mean, "All three can show their teeth to say, 'Hey, watch it.'

Student #6: (long pause)

Researcher: Any ideas?

Student #6: (pause) No ideas.

Researcher: And finally, what does "and all three can smile both with their mouths and their tails" mean?

Student #6: (long pause) I don't know.

Student # 1 Student Reading Level: Middle
Date: 3/19/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

The Blue and the Gray
Story by Eve Bunting
Illustrated by Ned Bittinger

Researcher: Do you remember that you heard the word "catwalk"?

Student #1: Yeah.

Researcher: Okay. Can you tell me what it means when I read you this sentence from where it came? Tall ladders lean against the houses, cross between, like catwalks. Can you tell me what that word means in that sentence? "Catwalk."

Student #1: Umm.. It means like you're walking with four legs?

Researcher: Okay.

Student #1: I think it does.

Researcher: Yup. You know, what's most important right now is what *you* think. Okay, what it means is a narrow walk, like along a bridge, beside a bridge there's usually a little walk and that's a catwalk.

Researcher: Musket. "Their red flags tossed and flamed like fire. The barrels of their muskets hard and black gave back the dazzle of the sun." What does "muskets" mean?

Student #1: I think it means that they, they, they, the flags move fast as fire and uh, when there's fire on the flag.

Researcher: Okay, a musket is a gun with a long barrel. Do you remember the guns that the soldiers were holding? They had to load those by hand. It was used in warfare before modern rifles were invented. Okay, so now you know a new word.

Researcher: What did the boy find in the gravel where the builders had dug?

Student #1: Um, shovels and those diggin' things.

Researcher: Okay. What happened in the field more than a hundred years ago?

Student #1: Um, peop... a hundred, a lot of hundred peoples died.

Researcher: There was a battle there, huh.

Student #1: And all a hundred peoples died.

Researcher: Yeah, it was very sad. Very sad.

Researcher: What did the father mean when he said "*We'll* be a monument of sorts, a part of what they fought for long ago."?

Student #1: Um, they'll be, they'll make a guns and have guns so they, so they could fight.

Researcher: I hope that Mr. Anthony is able to read this story again to you and talk about it a lot more. This is an important book for you to know about.

Researcher: Why did the boy toss what he thought was a bullet into the field of bones?

Student #1: What?

Researcher: Why did he toss it in there? Why did he toss the bullet?

Student #1: Because he didn't want to shoot one of his teams and one of his on his side so he dropped the bullet so he wouldn't have to hold it.

Researcher: Okay. That was a very good answer. You've been thinking about that, haven't you?

Student # 2 Student Reading Level: High
Date: 3/19/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

The Blue and the Gray
Story by Eve Bunting
Illustrated by Ned Bittinger

Researcher: The word that I want for you to define for me is "catwalk." The ladders lean against the houses, cross between, like catwalks. Do you remember that?

Student #2: Um, hum.

Researcher: Okay, can you tell me what the catwalk is?

Student #2: It's like a little board that, um, that like, that goes to roof to roof for houses, for cats won't, um, fall.

Researcher: Oh, okay. A little board that goes between houses? Is that what you said?

Student #2: Um, hum.

Researcher: So cats won't fall?

Student #2: Yeah.

Researcher: Okay.

Student #2: 'Cause a lot of cats go on the roof.

Researcher: Musket. Their red flags tossed and flamed like fire. The barrels of their muskets hard and black gave back the dazzle of the sun. What does "muskets" mean?

Student #2: Um, guns going off.

Researcher: Anything else you want to say about that? Muskets.

Student #2: Or maybe its like, like those, you know those um, little car thingies where it has those guns on top of them and.

Researcher: Oh, the, are they tanks?

Student #2: Yeah, tanks.

Researcher: Maybe its like tanks. So what's called a musket?

Student #2: What called it?

Researcher: What part of that, the tank is the musket?

Student #2: The gun thingie.

Researcher: Okay.

Researcher: What did the boy find in the gravel where the builders had dug?

Student #2: A bullet.

Researcher: What happened in the field more than a hundred years ago?

Student #2: There was like, wars.

Researcher: What did the father mean when he said "*We 'll* be a monument of sorts, a part of what they fought for long ago."?

Student #2: Um, remember this, remember this and make sure it doesn't happen ever again.

Researcher: Okay. And the last questions that I have for the day is, Why did the boy toss what he thought was a bullet into the field of bones? Why did he toss it? He thought he might keep it for a souvenir, remember?

Student #2: Because he just wanted to throw in there for somebody else would find it.

Researcher: But, why wouldn't he want to keep it? Why would he want someone else to find it?

Student #2: Because it might go off in front of him.

Researcher: You did terrific!

Student # 3 Student Reading Level: Low
Date: 3/19/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

The Blue and the Gray
Story by Eve Bunting
Illustrated by Ned Bittinger

Researcher: I want you to define the word "catwalk," tell me what it means in this sentence. Tall ladders lean against the houses, cross between, like catwalks. What does that mean? "Catwalks."

Student #3: (pause)I don't know.

Researcher: Mr. Anthony will explain it when he reads the story again, okay? Muskets. Their red flags tossed and flamed like fire. The barrels of their muskets hard and black gave back the dazzle of the sun. The barrels of their muskets. What does "muskets" mean?

Student #3: (pause) I don't know.

Researcher: Okay. What did the boy find in the gravel where the builders had dug?

Student #3: (Long pause as student thinks)

Researcher: What did they find, what did he find?

Student #3: (Long pause as student thinks)

Researcher: Do you have any idea?

Student #3: (pause) I don't know.

Researcher: Okay. You know what? You'll know a little better next time you read it, won't you having heard it once before. You'll remember it a little better.

Researcher: What happened in the field more than one hundred years ago?

Student #3: The (pause), the mans fight each other.

Researcher: Okay. See you remember the book. That was very good.

Researcher: Now, this is your opinion, okay? I'm asking you what you think. What did the father mean when he said "*We'll* be a monument of sorts, a part of what they fought for long ago."? Did you understand what I said? (Student nods) What do you think "*We'll* be a monument of sorts, a part of what they fought for long ago."

Student #3: (Long pause)

Researcher: Do you have any ideas?

Student #3: (pause) I don't know.

Researcher: You know what? It's okay because the next time you hear it, you'll hear a little more and then you'll be able to say. Okay, last question. You ready? Okay. Why did the boy toss what he thought was a bullet into the field of bones? Why did he throw it away?

Student #3: Because he, because his, his dog wouldn't chew it. Because his dog wanted chew it up.

Researcher: Oh, that was a, that was good thinking. Now what did you say again? Because his dog...

Student #3: Wanted to chew it up.
Researcher: Excellent answer. You are thinking, aren't you?

Student # 4 Student Reading Level: High
Date: 3/19/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

The Blue and the Gray
Story by Eve Bunting
Illustrated by Ned Bittinger

Researcher: Here's another word that you need to tell me what it means. Okay. The word is "catwalks" and I'll read you a sentence. Tall ladders lean against the houses, cross between, like catwalks. What does "catwalks" mean?

Student #4: I don't know.

Researcher: Okay; that's a good, honest answer. The next word is "musket." Their red flags tossed and flamed like fire. The barrels of their muskets hard and black gave back the dazzle of the sun." Hmm. What does musket mean?

Student #4: A gun.

Researcher: You are the first and only person to get that so far. Congratulations. A musket is a kind of gun that was used in warfare before modern rifles were created. Very good. All right, what did the boy find in the gravel where the builders had dug?

Student #4: A bullet.

Researcher: What happened in the field more than a hundred years ago?

Student #4: Soldiers used to fight in the field.

Researcher: Okay, I'm going to ask you your opinion. I'm going to ask you what you think. There's no right or wrong answer. What did the father mean when he said "*We'll* be a monument of sorts, a part of what they fought for long ago."? "*We'll* be a monument of sorts, a part of what they fought for long ago."?

Student #4: I think that means they're going to be apart.

Researcher: You want to say anything else on that?

Student #4: No.

Researcher: They're going to be apart, you mean like they're going to come apart, or they're going to join them?

Student #4: Come apart.

Researcher: Okay. Why did the boy toss what he thought was a bullet into the field of bones?
Student #4: Because the soldiers used to keep that and shoot them out of their guns and, um, the soldiers used to have that and the sides were a little bit the small like that cause like kind of smushed.

Researcher: The side was kind of smushed, it was dented, maybe? And so, why did he throw it back?

Student #4: 'Cause that's where the soldiers were shooting the guns and the soldiers had war.

Researcher: Um, hum. So, were they going to use them again, or what?

Student #4: No, because the died long ago.

Researcher: Okay. All right. Those were really thoughtful answers.

Student # 5 Student Reading Level: Middle
Date: 3/19/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

The Blue and the Gray
Story by Eve Bunting
Illustrated by Ned Bittinger

Researcher: I'm going to read a sentence and I want you to tell me what the word "catwalks" means in this sentence. Tall ladders lean against the houses, cross between, like catwalks."

Student #5: I don't know.

Researcher: Okay. The word is "musket." Their red flags tossed and flamed like fire. The barrels of their muskets hard and black gave back the dazzle of the sun."

Student #5: I think they are, um, some more fire, the flags are fire, like in the flags, I think it is.

Researcher: Okay. What did the boy find in the gravel where the builders had dug?

Student #5: A bullet.

Researcher: What happened in the field more than a hundred years ago?

Student #5: There was a army fight.

Researcher: Now, these are what you think. You don't have to, there is no answer except the one that's in your head. Okay, what you think. What did the father mean when he said "*We 'll* be a monument of sorts, a part of what they fought for long ago."? "*We 'll* be a monument."

Student #5: I didn't hear what you said.

Researcher: You want me to say that again? (student nods) Okay. When the father said this, what did he mean, and this is what he said, ""*We 'll* be a monument, a part of what they fought for, a long time ago." "*We 'll* be the monument."

Student #5: I think that that means that they will fight, too in the army.

Researcher: Um, hum.

Researcher: Okay, the last question, why did the boy toss what he thought was a bullet into the field of bones?

Student #5: Um, so somebody else could find it and that could be a souvenir for them.

Researcher: Excellent answer. You were really thinking. You have a lot in that head.

Student # 6 Student Reading Level: Low
Date: 3/19/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

The Blue and the Gray
Story by Eve Bunting
Illustrated by Ned Bittinger

Researcher: Looking for you to tell me what the word "catwalks" means, okay? And I'll read the sentence. Tall ladders lean against the houses, cross between, like catwalks.

Student #6: I don't know what it means.

Researcher: Okay, that's fine. When Mr. Anthony reads it again, you'll understand it better because he's going to talk about it a lot more. The next word is "muskets." Their red flags tossed and flamed like fire. (Student #6 coughs) The barrels (Student #6 coughs) of their mu... I'll start that again. The barrels of their muskets hard and black gave back the dazzle of the sun. Muskets. The barrels of their muskets.

Student #6: I don't know what it means.

Researcher: What did the boy find in the gravel where the builders had dug? What did he find?

Student #6: Okay. I don't know.

Researcher: What happened in the field more than a hundred years ago?

Student #6: (pause)

Researcher: What happened there a long time ago before the boys came along?

Student #6: I don't know.

Researcher: Okay. What did the father mean when he said "*We'll* be a monument of sorts, a part of what they fought for long ago."? *We'll* be a monument.

Student #6: I don't know.

Researcher: No guesses?

Student #6: Nope.

Researcher: Okay. Why did the boy toss what he thought was a bullet into the field of bones? Why didn't he keep it?

Student #6: I don't know.

Researcher: You want to think about that a while? It's okay. We have time.

Student #6: I don't know what it means.

Researcher: Well, he had the bullet, right? And he thought that he might keep it for a souvenir, but then all of a sudden, he threw it away. Why did he toss it away?

Student #6: I don't know. I don't know what it means.

Researcher: Oh, okay.

Student # 1 Student Reading Level: Middle
Date: 3/22/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

The Gardener
Story by Sarah Stewart
Illustrated by David Small

Researcher: This is the vocabulary word (pointing to word on assessment). The vocabulary word is "doze," and it's in here and I'm going to read it and you tell me what this word means when I'm through. And, dearest Grandma, Thank you for the seeds. The train is rocking me to sleep, and every time I doze off, I dream of gardens. What does doze mean?

Student #1: Um, that means he fell asleep.

Researcher: Very good! The word is sprucing. Emma and I are sprucing up the bakery and I'm playing a great trick on Uncle Jim. Sprucing.

Student #1: Um, that means you're planting the seeds with Uncle Jim.

Researcher: How did Lydia Grace know how to recognize Uncle Jim when she rode the train to stay with him?

Student #1: Um, 'cause he had a beard and, um, she already knowed 'cause she saw him already.

Researcher: When did she see him before?

Student #1: Um, when she was 3 or 5.

Researcher: Okay. Where did Lydia Grace go to get the dirt that she used to plant her seeds and flowers?

Student #1: From the, from, from the, the dirt store.

Researcher: How does Lydia Grace know that Uncle Jim really loves her even though he never smiled?

Student #1: Um, because its, its, he's, she's one of hers families.

Researcher: Why did Lydia Grace go to live with Uncle Jim?

Student #1: Uncle, on the, on the roof?

Researcher: No, why did she go live with Uncle Jim?

Student #1: Because, um, she wanted to live with him because she was his uncle

Researcher: Good. That's it.

Student # 2 Student Reading Level: High
Date: 3/22/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

The Gardener
Story by Sarah Stewart
Illustrated by David Small

Researcher: The word that I want you to tell me the meaning of is "doze" and this is the way that it was in the book. And, dearest Grandma, Thank you for the seeds. The train is rocking me to sleep, and every time I doze off, I dream of gardens.

Student #2: Sleep.

Researcher: Okay. Sprucing. Emma and I are sprucing up the bakery and I'm playing a great trick on Uncle Jim. Want me to read that again? (student nods) Emma and I are sprucing up the bakery and I'm playing a great trick on Uncle Jim. Sprucing.

Student #2: Talking.

Researcher: How did Lydia Grace know how to recognize Uncle Jim when she rode the train to stay with him? How did she know how he looked, how she would know him?

Student #2: How--she remembered him not smiling?

Researcher: Where did Lydia Grace go to get the dirt that she used to plant her seeds and flowers?

Student #2: Store that was just down the street.

Researcher: How does Lydia Grace know that Uncle Jim really loves her even though he never smiled?

Student #2: He listens to her and likes her, um, planting.

Researcher: Good thinking. And likes her planting?

Student #2: Um, hum.

Researcher: Why did Lydia Grace go to live with Uncle Jim?

Student #2: Because she, she didn't see him for a very long time.

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Student # 3 Student Reading Level: Low
Date: 3/22/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

The Gardener
Story by Sarah Stewart
Illustrated by David Small

Researcher: The word that I want you to tell me what it means is, "doze." And, dearest Grandma, Thank you for the seeds. The train is rocking me to sleep, and every time I doze off, I dream of gardens. What does the word doze mean there? Do you want me to read that again? (student nods) Okay. And, dearest Grandma, Thank you for the seeds. The train is rocking me to sleep, and every time I doze off, I dream of gardens. What's another word or words that we could use for doze?

Student #3: (long pause)

Researcher: Can you think of something?

Student #3: (pause)

Researcher: Do you have any idea?

Student #3: I don't know.

Researcher: After you think a while, if you really don't know, it's okay to say that. The word is sprucing. Sprucing. Emma and I are sprucing up the bakery and I'm playing a great trick on Uncle Jim. Shall I read it again? (student nods) Emma and I are sprucing up the bakery and I'm playing a great trick on Uncle Jim.

Student #3: (long pause)

Researcher: Any idea?

Student #3: I forgot.

Researcher: Okay. How did Lydia Grace know how to recognize Uncle Jim when she rode the train to stay with him? How did she know which man would be Uncle Jim?

Student #3: At the bakery.

Researcher: At the bakery? What about the bakery?

Student #3: Uncle Jim makes cake and bread.

Researcher: Okay. That's she'd know him? (student nods) Where did Lydia Grace go to get the dirt that she used to plant her seeds and flowers?

Student #3: Under the ground.

Researcher: Under the ground? Where did she go? Where did she go under the ground?

Student #3: She brought a bag and she went to dig a hole for dirt for the plants.

Researcher: Okay. How does Lydia Grace know that Uncle Jim really loves her even though he never smiled?

Student #3: Uncle Jim always (long pause).

Researcher: Any idea? (Student #11 shakes head) You have to say it.

Student #3: I forgot.

Researcher: Why did Lydia Grace go to live with Uncle Jim?

Student #3: Because she probably she miss him.

Researcher: That's a good reason to go visit somebody. Okay. Great!

Student # 4 Student Reading Level: High
Date: 3/22/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

The Gardener
Story by Sarah Stewart
Illustrated by David Small

Researcher: The word I want you to tell me the meaning of is "doze" and this is how it was in the book. And, dearest Grandma, Thank you for the seeds. The train is rocking me to sleep, and every time I doze off, I dream of gardens. What does doze mean? Every time I doze off I dream of gardens.

Student #4: I don't know.

Researcher: Sprucing. Emma and I are sprucing up the bakery and I'm playing a great trick on Uncle Jim. . Emma and I are sprucing up the bakery. Sprucing.

Student #4: That means it, they're making more people to come so, so he could be happy but he doesn't want to be happy but at the end he's happy because he gives a cake that has flowers on it.

Researcher: You really got that, didn't you? How did Lydia Grace know how to recognize Uncle Jim when she rode the train to stay with him?

Student #4: Because the mom said, the mom said that he had big nose and he was at a bakery.

Researcher: Where did Lydia Grace go to get the dirt that she used to plant her seeds and flowers?

Student #4: 'Cause the grandma sent her seeds or flowers so she could plant them so they could be beautiful everywhere and so the, um, uncle could be happy.

Researcher: Oh, and where did she get the dirt that she used to plant the seeds in?

Student #4: She got them (flowers) in from the bag where the grandma gave it to and there was a little bit seeds in there.

Researcher: Oh, okay. That's right, you saw the bag and the seeds were falling out. Okay. How does Lydia Grace know that Uncle Jim really loves her even though he never smiled?

Student #4: Because when he read that letter that she give him, she put, he put it in her pock..., his pocket and patted it.

Researcher: Okay.

Student #4: I think that's how he loved her.

Researcher: You are so good. Why did Lydia Grace go on the train to live with Uncle Jim?

Student #4: Because the mother wants her to see what he, he looks like and wants her to make him happy because he never smiles.

Researcher: Excellent.

Student # 5 Student Reading Level: Middle
Date: 3/22/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

The Gardener
Story by Sarah Stewart
Illustrated by David Small

Researcher: The word that I want you to tell me the meaning of is "doze." And, dearest Grandma, Thank you for the seeds. The train is rocking me to sleep, and every time I doze off, I dream of gardens.

Student #5: I think it means dreaming.

Researcher: Sprucing. Emma and I are sprucing up the bakery and I'm playing a great trick on Uncle Jim. Emma and I are sprucing up the bakery.

Student #5: I think it means that, that you're, um, playing a game with another person you're trying to trick it.

Researcher: Oh, okay. How did Lydia Grace know how to recognize Uncle Jim when she rode the train to stay with him?

Student #5: Recognize him?

Researcher: Um, hum.

Student #5: Because he has a big nose and a beard.

Researcher: Okay. Where did Lydia Grace go to get the dirt that she used to plant her seeds and flowers? Where did she get that dirt?

Student #5: Oh...Oh, a hill or something.

Researcher: Down a hill? (student nods) Okay. Did she go to the store, or what did she do?

Student #5: She, um, she went, I don't know.

Researcher: Okay, that's fine; down a hill. How does Lydia Grace know that Uncle Jim really loves her even though he never smiled?

Student #5: Because he took the poem and he stucked it in his pocket like this (patting chest).

Researcher: Why did Lydia Grace go to live with Uncle Jim?

Student #5: Hmm. I don't know.

Researcher: I'm going to give you some time to think about this, okay. I'll ask you the question again for a few seconds and then you tell me. Why did Lydia Grace go to live with Uncle Jim? Why did she ride the train to stay with Uncle Jim?

Student #5: Um, because (pause) she (pause) had to.

Researcher: What made it so that she had to?

Student #5: Hmm. (pause)

Researcher: Remember? She had to, why?

Student #5: They, I don't know.

Researcher: Okay, that's fine. Excellent work.

Student # 6 Student Reading Level: Low
Date: 3/22/99 Reading Method: Control Condition

The Gardener
Story by Sarah Stewart
Illustrated by David Small

Researcher: Can you tell me what this word "doze" means after I read this? And, dearest Grandma, Thank you for the seeds. The train is rocking me to sleep, and every time I doze off, I dream of gardens.

Student #6: I don't know what it means.

Researcher: You want me to read that again?

Researcher: Thank you for the seeds. The train is rocking me to sleep, and every time I doze off, I dream of gardens. Every time I doze off...

Student #6: It means...It means, um...(pause) I don't know.

Researcher: Okay, that's fine. You know how sometimes you go to sleep for a few minutes and then you wake up and then you go to sleep again? Doze is a little nap. All right? So she's going to take a little nap and dreaming about gardens. Okay, the next word, ready? Sprucing. Emma and I are sprucing up the bakery and I'm playing a great trick on Uncle Jim. Emma and I are sprucing up the bakery. What does sprucing mean?

Student #6: It means...I don't know what it means.

Researcher: You want to think about that for a little while?

Student #6: I don't know.

Researcher: Okay, that's fine. It's the same as saying fixing or cleaning up. Emma and I are cleaning up the bakery or Emma and I are fixing up the bakery. That's what the word sprucing means. You see it now? How did Lydia Grace know how to recognize Uncle Jim when she rode the train to stay with him? How did Lydia Grace know to find Uncle Jim? How to know what he looked like?

Student #6: I don't know. I don't know what it means.

Researcher: That's okay. Where did Lydia Grace go to get the dirt that she used to plant her seeds and flowers?

Student #6: I don't know.

Researcher: Do you remember when she said that she found really great dirt down the street and it smelled so sweet?

Student #6: Yeah.

Researcher: You remember that?

Student #6: Yeah, but I don't know what it means.

Researcher: Oh, okay. Have you ever smelled rotten smelling dirt that smells like its spoiled and sour; smells like something that you might have gotten out of the refrigerator that stayed in there too long? (student shake his head) No? Well, it's okay. You'll have a chance to do that some day.

Researcher: How does Lydia Grace know that Uncle Jim really loves her even though he never smiled? Ah, come on; give this some thought. Think about what happened in the story.

Student #6: (long pause) I don't know.

Researcher: I can tell that you were giving that some thought, though. I could see your mind working. You ever look in somebody eyes and see their brain working? Thank you for giving that some thought. Why did Lydia Grace go to live with Uncle Jim? Why did she go to live with him and go by train?

Student #6: (extra long pause) I don't know.

Researcher: Remember at the very beginning of the story, she talked about how her papa had lost his job and her mama wasn't sewing dresses for anybody anymore? No? Okay.

Student # 1 Student Reading Level: Middle
Date: 3/23/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Granddaddy'sGift
Story by Margaree King Mitchell
Illustrated by Larry Johnson

Researcher: The word that I want you to tell me about is "segregation." I want you to tell me what it means. He told us that many years ago, segregation laws had been passed in the South to keep black people from having the same rights as white people. What does segregationmean?

Student #1: Ah, it, it mean that they, they gotta go clean up on their fingers and then they the sticky stuff on their hands and the next day their hand is all bloodies.

Researcher: Okay. Granddaddy went into one of the offices and told the lady behind the counter that he wanted to register to vote. Register. What does that mean?

Student #1: It means you want to vote and try and not to clean up thing where all the cotton is.

Researcher: Okay. How far in school was Granddaddy able to go? At what grade did he have to stop?

Student #1: Third.

Researcher: What kind of a test did Granddaddy have to take register to vote?

Student #1: Um, a register?

Researcher: Yeah, what of a test did he have to take before they let him register to vote?

Student #1: Um, (pause) one of those testes where you have to be registered and then, um, sign the papers on how old you, when's your birthday, and what's your name.

Researcher: Okay. Why did the man at the courthouse tell Granddaddy, "Just be satisfied with what you have"?

Student #1: Um, just, um, be happy what you have.

Researcher: Yeah. What does that mean?

Student #1: It means, um, things you have at your homes, um, be happy with it and even though your books are torn up and missing pages.

Researcher: Okay. Why would someone burn the church the night that Granddaddy had registered to vote?

Student #1: Because he wanted to vote?

Researcher: Who?

Student #1: Granddaddy wanted to vote with his test.

Researcher: And, so that's why they burned it down? But what would burning the church down do? Why would he do that?

Student #1: Because that's what the white peoples tolds him to do.

Researcher: Um, okay. That was excellent, excellent responses!

Student # 2 Student Reading Level: High
Date: 3/23/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Granddaddy'sGift
Story by Margaree King Mitchell
Illustrated by Larry Johnson

Researcher: All right, the word is segregation. He told us that many years ago, segregation laws had been passed in the South to keep black people from having the same rights as white people.

Student #2: It means that black people can't come and drink from the white people's drinking fountain and they can't go in their store, buildings unless they go back from the back door.

Researcher: Okay, great! The word is register. Granddaddy went into one of the offices and told the lady behind the counter that he wanted to register to vote.

Student #2: Register means, um, to like write your name and, and, and, and, what day you were born and what date it was.

Researcher: Okay, anything else?

Student #2: And how old you are.

Researcher: Okay. All of that was just perfect. How far in school was Granddaddy able to go? At what grade did he have to stop?

Student #2: Eighth grade.

Researcher: You're going to go all the way and be a doctor, aren't you? What kind of a test was Granddaddy required to take before he could register to vote?

Student #2: Um, (pause) something that started with a 'c' and ended with an 'n'.

Researcher: Did it have, how much, did it have four syllables?

Student #2: Um, hum.

Researcher: Okay. Shall I start you out?

Student #2: Um, hum.

Researcher: Con...

Student #2: Constination.

Researcher: Constellation? (student nods) Okay. And what state was it from?

Student #2: California; no, Mississippi.

Researcher: Um, okay.

Researcher: Why did the man at the courthouse tell Granddaddy, "Just be satisfied with what you have"?

Student #2: Because he didn't want, he didn't want him to vote.

Researcher: Okay. Why would somebody burn the church the night that Granddaddy had registered to vote?

Student #2: Because they want to show that the gr..., they want, they want to like pretend that the grandfather did...

Researcher: Ahhh...

Student #2: for he could get in trouble for it.

Researcher: You know, I hadn't thought of that but that might very well be

Student # 3 Student Reading Level: Low
Date: 3/23/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Granddaddy'sGift
Story by Margaree King Mitchell
Illustrated by Larry Johnson

Researcher: The word that I want you to tell me what it means is "segregation." He told us that many years ago, segregation laws had been passed in the South to keep black people from having the same rights as white people. Segregation

Student #3: (long pause) I forgot-t-t-t-t-t-.

Researcher: The word is "register." Granddaddy went into one of the offices and told the lady behind the counter that he wanted to register to vote

Student #3: I know why Granddaddy wanted to vote because (pause) he want to have a other car

Researcher: He wanted to have...

Student #3: A other car

Researcher: Another car? Okay. So what did he do to, to register?

Student #3: Because he want to vote

Researcher: But what does it mean when you register for something?

Student #3: (long pause)

Researcher: I know it's in there. You're trying really hard to get it out. Can you do that?

Student #3: (long pause)

Researcher: Remember when she said, do you know? Can you tell me what register means?

Student #3: (pause) I forgot.

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Researcher: Remember when she gave her name and her address and her birthday? Remember that? How far, at what grade did Granddaddy have to stop going to school?

Student #3: (pause) Um, (pause), um, (pause)

Researcher: Do you know? (student shakes her head) You want to give me answer then?

Student #3: I don't know.

Researcher: What kind of a test did Granddaddy have to take to be able to register to vote?

Student #3: He had to (pause), um,

Researcher: What kind of a test ?

Student #3: (pause)

Researcher: Do you remember what state he was in?

Student #3: No.

Researcher: Okay. So what kind of a test was Granddaddy required to take to be able to register to vote?

Student #3: (pause)

Researcher: May I have an answer?

Student #3: I forgot.

Researcher: Okay. Remember the Mississippi Constitution test?

Student #3: Nuh.

Researcher: No? Why did the man at the courthouse tell Granddaddy, "Just be satisfied with what you have"?

Student #3: (long pause)

Researcher: Just be satisfied with what you have. (long pause) Any ideas?

Student #3: I don't know.

Researcher: Why would someone burn the church the night that Granddaddy had registered to vote?

Student #3: (pause)

Researcher: Come on, take a chance. Why would somebody burn the church?

Student #3: (long pause) I don't know.

Researcher: That's a perfectly legitimate answer. Alrighty.

Student # 4 Student Reading Level: High
Date: 3/23/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Granddaddy'sGift
Story by Margaree King Mitchell
Illustrated by Larry Johnson

Researcher: The word is segregation. He told us that many years ago, segregation laws had been passed in the South to keep black people from having the same rights as white people. Can you tell me what segregation means?

Student #4: I think what it means is that they want to vote and they wanted to be treated like Americans.

Researcher: Okay. All right. So, but what does the word mean?

Student #4: I don't know.

Researcher: Okay. Register. Do you know what the word "register" means? (student nods) What does it mean?

Student #4: It means that if there is a contest and you want to join in, you have to sign your name and your birthday and, um, you have to sign in so you can get in.

Researcher: Oh, okay. So that they know that you want to do it. Okay. What grade did Granddaddy stop going to school?

Student #4: Eighth.

Researcher: Okay. What kind of a test did Granddaddy have to take to be able to register to vote?

Student #4: I don't know.

Researcher: Take a guess.

Student #4: Um, the one that you got...

Researcher: Describe it to me.

Student #4: Um, it's hard and you have to do it.

Researcher: Um, hum. Give me any other clues?

Student #4: It's gonna be the hard for people to do it and...

Researcher: Was there anything you remembered about the name of this test?

Student #4: No

Researcher: Okay. That was a pretty good answer, though. Why did the man at the courthouse tell Granddaddy, "Just be satisfied with what you have"?

Student #4: Because, um, I think because her great-grandfather won't be scared of that thing.

Researcher: Of what thing?

Student #4: Of the math paper.

Researcher: Of the math paper? Okay. Why would someone burn the church the night that Granddaddy had registered to vote?

Student #4: Because he didn't want them to vote because like in old days, white people didn't like black people.

Researcher: Excellent, excellent responses. Good!

Student # 5 Student Reading Level: Middle
Date: 3/23/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Granddaddy'sGift
Story by Margaree King Mitchell
Illustrated by Larry Johnson

Researcher: The word that I want you to tell me the meaning of is "segregation." Shall I read to you or do you want to just go ahead and tell me the definition?

Student #5: Um, it means that you, um, have to do something, um, separated.

Researcher: Wow! I'm impressed. The word is register. Do you remember that or shall I read the sentence?

Student #5: Can you read the sentence?

Researcher: Sure can. Granddaddy went into one of the offices and told the lady behind the counter that he wanted to register to vote.

Student #5: That means that he wants to, um, try and sign the papers so he can try and vote.

Researcher: What grade did Granddaddy finish before he had to stop school?

Student #5: Eighth grade.

Researcher: What kind of a test was Granddaddy required to take to register?

Student #5: A vote test.

Researcher: A vote test? What was that? What kind of a test was that?

Student #5: It was something that you have to try and vote on. You have to sign this paper and sign, um, well, your name and how old are you are and when's your birthday.

Researcher: Do you remember what was on the test?

Student #5: Hard things.

Researcher: Like what?

Student #5: Like (pause), um, I don't know.

Researcher: Okay. But was it an easy test?

Student #5: No.

Researcher: Did he have to study a lot or just a little?

Student #5: He had to study a lot.

Researcher: Do you remember how many questions were on there?

Student #5: Twenty-two questions, I think. No, seventy-two.

Researcher: You're getting confused. Remember seventy-one pages were in the California Constitutions.

Student #5: Oh.

Researcher: Twenty-two was correct. Twenty-two questions.

Researcher: Why did the man at the courthouse tell Granddaddy, "Just be satisfied with what you have"?

Student #5: Probably because he didn't want him to win.

Researcher: What, you mean to vote?

Student #5: Yeah.

Researcher: Okay. Why would someone burn the church the night that Granddaddy had registered to vote?

Student #5: I think the white guy did it because he didn't want him to vote.

Student # 6 Student Reading Level: Low
Date: 3/23/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Granddaddy'sGift
Story by Margaree King Mitchell
Illustrated by Larry Johnson

Researcher: The word is segregation. Can you tell me what that means?

Student #6: Segregation means... segregation means, um, it means... I don't know.

Researcher: Okay. You want me to read the sentence and that might help you? (student shakes head) Segregation laws have been passed in the South to prevent people from having the same rights as white people. Now you think you could tell me what segregationmeans?

Student #6: Segregation means, um, segregation mean, um, it means, I don't know.

Researcher: Register. You want to tell me what that means, or shall I read the sentence? (student nods) Okay. Granddaddy went into the offices and told the lady behind the counter that he wanted to register to vote.

Student #6: Register means, um,...I don't know.

Researcher: Do you want to take a guess?

Student #6: (student shakes his head)

Researcher: What grade did Granddaddy finish before he had to stop going to school?

Student #6: (pause)

Researcher: You know that.

Student #6: I don't know.

Researcher: How far did he go before he had to stop?

Student #6: I don't know.

Researcher: Remember he couldn't go any farther because it was so far away?

Student #6: Yeah.

Researcher: He, um, he, um, I don't know.

Researcher: What kind of a test was Granddaddy made to take to register to vote?

Student #6: (pause) I don't know.

Researcher: And why did the man at the courthouse tell Granddaddy, "Just be satisfied with what you have"?

Student #6: He um, . . he, uh. I don't know.

Researcher: Oh, you had an idea there. Why don't you finish it?

Student #6: He um, (pause) I don't know.

Researcher: Oh, come on.

Student #6: He um, (pause) He (pause) I don't know.

Researcher: Go on to the next question. Why would somebody burn the church the night that Granddaddy had registered to vote? Why would somebody do something like that to the church?

Student #6: Because, um, they just, they want, um, do that purpose.

Researcher: Yeah, why? Why would they do that on purpose?

Student #6: Because, um, they don't be, they don't, um, go to church.

Researcher: 'Cause they just don't go to church and so they burned it because.

Student #6: I don't know.

Student # 1 Student Reading Level: Middle
Date: 3/24/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Lou Gehrig: the luckiest man
Story by David A. Adler
Illustrated by Terry Widener

Researcher: I'm looking for the meaning of the word "consecutive." Can you tell me what it means? (student shake his head) Shall I read the sentence?(student nods) Okay. For the next fourteen years Lou Gehrig played in twenty-one hundred, 2,130 consecutive Yankee games. Consecutive.

Student #1: It means he played a lot of games. It means he played to hundred, one hundred thirty, one hundred games.

Researcher: Two thousand, one hundred thirty games?

Student #1: (student nods)

Researcher: Good. Anything else you want to say about the word consecutive?

Student #1: Um, when, um, you played a whole bunch of games and then, and then you grow up, go to college and then you end up playing baseball and, um, getting a lot of monies.

Researcher: (gasp) Remember, it means one after the other?

Student #1: Um.

Researcher: ... without missing any.

Student #1: Yeah.

Researcher: Yeah.

Researcher: Salary. What does salary mean?

Student #1: Um, uh, money.

Researcher: Money for what?

Student #1: Money for the game or the colleges.

Researcher: Why didn't Lou's mother want Lou to quit college to join the Yankees?

Student #1: Because she wanted him to learn and do more math and do times and, um, grow up instead of playing baseball.

Researcher: Okay. What was the weather like on the day of Lou Gehrig's funeral?

Student #1: Raining.

Researcher: Why do you think that Lou Gehrig would tell his friends not to worry by saying, "I'll gradually get better."? Do you remember that?

Student #1: Um, what?

Researcher: Why do you think that Lou Gehrig would tell his friends not to worry by saying, "I'll gradually get better."? Do you remember that?

Student #1: Because he was, he was sick and he, he was sick and then he would get better. He was, he was sick and then he told his, his baseball te--, mates that he would get better.

Researcher: Okay. But why did he say that to them?

Researcher: Did he believe that he was going to get better?

Student #1: He thought he was.

Researcher: He really thought that he was. Okay.

Researcher: Why did Lou Gehrig consider himself "the luckiest man on the face of the earth?"

Student #1: Because he was hitting a lot of home runs.

Researcher: Oh, okay. And he thought that he was lucky to be able to do that?

Student #1: (student nods)

Researcher: You really listened to the story. Did you like it? (student nods) Can you talk into the machine?

Student #1: Huh?

Researcher: Can you talk?

Student #1: Uh huh.

Researcher: Did you really enjoy this book?

Student #1: Yeah.

Researcher: Okay. (laughs)

Student #1: My grandpa had this book.

Researcher: (astonished) He does?

Student #1: But he lives far away. He's in Las Vegas. With my grandma. He's in Las Vegas with my grandma.

Researcher: You know, the San Diego Padres have a farm team, a team where they get other players, and they play in Las Vegas. Did you know that?

Student #1: Un um. Did not know that.

Researcher: You can talk to your grandpa. Maybe if you talk to him, you could go to some of those baseball games.

Student #1: Maybe my uncle could take me.

Researcher: Maybe. Hey, that'd be neat.

Student # 2 Student Reading Level: High
Date: 3/24/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Lou Gehrig; the luckiest man
Story by David A. Adler
Illustrated by Terry Widener

Researcher: The word is consecutive. Can you tell me what that is or shall I read the sentence?

Student #2: Read the sentence.

Researcher: Okay. For the next fourteen years Lou Gehrig played in 2,130 consecutive Yankeegames.

Student #2: It means every day he came, even if he had a , even if he had a sore back or a brokenfinger.

Researcher: Um, hum. Good. You were listening. Salary. Do I need to read the sentence here?

Student #2: No, it means money.

Researcher: Okay. Money for what?

Student #2: For, for he can, for he can, for they like offer him to go in the game.

Researcher: Okay, money for working on the Yankees?

Student #2: Um, hum.

Researcher: Is that a good way you want to say it?

Student #2: Yeah.

Researcher: Okay. Why didn't Lou's mother want Lou to quit college to join the Yankees?

Student #2: 'Cause she wanted him to be, um, a um, an...

Researcher: Are you thinking of the jobs that he was going, that she wanted him to do?

Student #2: (student nods). A fireman or something.

Researcher: A fireman? (pause) An engineer?

Student #2: Yeah, an engineering, an engineer. Duh...

Researcher: (laughs) Okay. What was the weather like on the day of Lou Gehrig's funeral?

Student #2: On his funeral?

Researcher: Um, hum.

Student #2: Rainy.

Researcher: Rainy. Why do you think that Lou Gehrig would tell his friends not to worry by saying, "I'll gradually get better. I'll be okay."?

Student #2: Because they didn't, he want, he didn't want them to get mad, I mean like (pause), like sad

Researcher: Oh, okay. Why did Lou Gehrig consider himself "the luckiest man on the face of the earth?"

Student #2: Because he, because they, they really yelling, um, they were yelling, like, 'Hip, hip, hooray!' and stuff like.

Researcher: When was that?

Student #2: On his, um, on his, on the Fourth of July

Researcher: Oh, okay.

Student #2: his celebration.

Researcher: Oh, the Fan Appreciation?

Student #2: Un, huh

Researcher: Yeah. Excellent. You've been listening. Thank you

Student # 3 Student Reading Level: Low
Date: 3/24/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Lou Gehrig; the luckiest man
Story by David A. Adler
Illustrated by Terry Widener

Researcher: All right. The word that I want you to tell me the meaning of is "consecutive." Do you know what that means or shall I read the sentence? (student nods) Read the sentence? (student nods) For the next fourteen years Lou Gehrig played in 2,130 consecutivegames.

Student #3: (long pause)

Researcher: Consecutive.

Student #3: I don't know.

Researcher: Remember that everybody's been in Mr. Anthony's class for three consecutive days? What's another way to say "consecutive"?

Student #3: (long pause)

Researcher: Remember it means one right after the other? All in a row? Remember that stuff? Remember that now? Remember we talked about that?

Student #3: I don't know.

Researcher: Okay. Salary. The Yankees offered Lou a salary.

Student #3: (pause) Salary means like money.

Researcher: Oh, good. And what is the money for? Why would they give him money? (pause while student thinks) You get a salary when you do.

Student #3: A job.

Researcher: Oh, okay. Excellent work. You even have a smile. Too bad the microphone can't see your smile. (both laugh) Why didn't Lou's mother want Lou to quit college to play with the Yankees?

Student #3: (long pause)

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Researcher: Any idea?

Student #3: I forgot.

Researcher: Remember she thought that he was ruining his life? Remember that part? Can we say "yes" or "no"?

Student #3: Yes.

Researcher: What was the weather like on the day of Lou Gehrig's funeral?

Student #3: (long pause)

Researcher: Was the sun shining?

Student #3: Yes.

Researcher: So what was the weather like?

Student #3: Like the light.

Researcher: Why do you think that Lou Gehrig would tell his friends, "I'll gradually get better. Don't worry about me. I'll get better."?

Student #3: Probably he's sick and he can't go to (pause)

Researcher: Go to...

Student #3: practice.

Researcher: Practice. Okay. Why did Lou Gehrig consider himself "the luckiest man on the face of the earth?"

Student #3: Probably he's dying.

Researcher: Probably he's dying? Excellent! You did great!

Student # 4 Student Reading Level: High
Date: 3/24/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Lou Gehrig: the luckiest man
Story by David A. Adler
Illustrated by Terry Widener

Researcher: The word that you need to tell me the meaning of is "consecutive." For the next fourteen years Lou Gehrig played in 2,130 consecutive Yankee games.

Student #4: That means he has bro, that means he has broken hand and he had a broken back but he never missed a game.

Researcher: Ah. That means one right after the other, right? Salary. The Yankees offered Lou a good salary.

Student #4: That means it's money.

Researcher: What for?

Student #4: Because he's a good player and they want him.

Researcher: Okay. Why didn't Lou's mother want Lou to quit college to join the Yankees?

Student #4: So they thought the Yankees would give him more money.

Researcher: What was the weather like on the day of his funeral?

Student #4: It was raining.

Researcher: Okay. Why do you think that Lou Gehrig would tell his friends not to worry by saying, "I'll gradually get better."?

Student #4: So, so they would remember him and so they won't cry.

Researcher: Why did Lou Gehrig think of himself "the luckiest man on the face of the earth?"

Student #4: Because the, the people they liked him very much and the people who played baseball with him gave him a lot of money and he was so brave.

Researcher: Wow! You got it all! Were you listening? Were you thinking as you were listening?

Student #4: Yeah.

Researcher: You did an excellent job.

Student # 5 Student Reading Level: Middle
Date: 3/24/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Lou Gehrig; the luckiest man
Story by David A. Adler
Illustrated by Terry Widener

Researcher: The word is "consecutive." Do you know what that means or shall I read the sentence?

Student #5: Can you read the sentence?

Researcher: Sure can. For the next fourteen years Lou Gehrig played in 2,130 consecutive Yankee games. Consecutive.

Student #5: I think that means that you haven't missed a game.

Researcher: Okay. The word is "salary." Do you know what that means, or shall I read the sentence?

Student #5: I, I think that it means that it's money.

Researcher: Is the money because of anything in particular?

Student #5: Um, hum.

Researcher: Why would they give him money?

Student #5: Oh, because, um, because, ah, he's working for the job.

Researcher: Why didn't Lou's mother want Lou to quit college to join the Yankees?

Student #5: What?

Researcher: Why didn't Lou's mother...Why did she want him to keep going to college and not play for the Yankees?

Student #5: Because she wants him to be smart.

Researcher: What was the weather like on the day of Lou Gehrig's funeral?

Student #5: Um, it rained.

Researcher: Why do you think that Lou Gehrig would tell his friends not to worry and he said, "I'll gradually get better."? Why do you think he did that?

Student #5: Because they, he didn't want them to feel bad.

Researcher: Lou Gehrig consider himself "the luckiest man on the face of the earth." Can you tell me what would make him say that?

Student #5: I think that he said that because he, um, he, he felt loved.

Researcher: You are a very insightful and deep person.

Student #5: Thank you.

Researcher: You listen very well, and I thank you for that.

Student #5: Thank you.

Researcher: You're welcome.

Student # 6 Student Reading Level: Low
Date: 3/24/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Lou Gehrig; the luckiest man
Story by David A. Adler
Illustrated by Terry Widener

Researcher: Remember that I want you to tell me what these words mean? Consecutive Shall I read the sentence? (student nods) For the next fourteen years Lou Gehrig played in 2,130 consecutive Yankee games. He played in consecutive games. What does that word mean?

Student #6: It means, um,

Researcher: You were telling me about consecutive and you were going to tell me what that means. Lou Gehrig played in consecutive Yankee games.

Student #6: (long pause)

Researcher: Remember how I said that for three consecutive days, everybody's been in Mr. Anthony's class? Three consecutive day. So on Monday everybody was here. On Tuesday everybody was here. And today on Wednesday everybody is here. Consecutive days. What's another way to say that?

Student #6: (pause) I don't know.

Researcher: So, you don't remember what that means? Remember that it means one right after the other? So he played in all the games that the Yankees played. Okay. Salary. The Yankees offered Lou Gehrig a good salary.

Student #6: Salary means money.

Researcher: And why would they pay him money?

Student #6: Because, um, um, Lou, um, this man, um, that.

Researcher: Lou Gehrig?

Student #6: Lou Gehrig, um, couldn't hit.

Researcher: Okay. Why didn't Lou's mother want Lou to quit college to play baseball? Why didn't she want him to play baseball with the Yankees instead of going to college?

Student #6: 'Cause she wouldn't be proud.

Researcher: She wouldn't be proud?

Student #6: She would.

Researcher: She would be proud? If what?

Student #6: She played footb... he played on baseball.

Researcher: She would be proud if he played baseball?

Student #6: (student nods)

Researcher: What was the weather like on the day of Lou Gehrig's funeral?

Student #6: To water the plants?

Researcher: Who watered the plants? What was the weather like?

Student #6: Rain.

Researcher: Why do you think Lou Gehrig would tell his friends when they went to visit him, "I'll gradually get better."?

Student #6: I don't know.

Researcher: Can you take a guess for me?

Student #6: (pause) I don't know.

Researcher: Okay. Why did Lou Gehrig called himself "the luckiest man on the face of the earth?" Even though a lot of bad things happened to him?

Student #6: He, um, he, um, he died, he died in the rain.

Student # 1 Student Reading Level: Middle
Date: 3/25/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Mailing May
Story by Michael O. Tunnell
Illustrated by Ted Rand

Researcher: Remember what the word "commenced" means?

Student #1: Um, means mailing somebody.

Researcher: It means mailing somebody?

Student #1: Yeah, to go to their grandma's house.

Researcher: Okay. It actually means start. Poultry.

Student #1: It means mail them now. It means, um, going over someone's house.

Researcher: Well, that may be deceptive. Well, Leonard, looks like you'll be in charge of some poultry on this mail run.

Student #1: Oh, it means in charge of the house.

Researcher: What did May do to try to get the money to go visit Grandma Mary?

Student #1: Huh?

Researcher: What did May try to do to get money to go visit Grandma Mary?

Student #1: She, she went to his daddy's job to get some money.

Researcher: Oh. How would she get the money?

Student #1: Huh?

Researcher: How did she do that?

Student #1: She didn't get none because, um, she, he said, the man said, 'I wish I could hire you but I can't. All the jobs in town are for grownups.

Researcher: Good. What was the most that a package that you wanted to mail could weigh? What was the most that May could weigh?

Student #1: Huh?

Researcher: How much, how many pounds could a package weigh and be mailed?

Student #1: Twenty pounds.

Researcher: Twenty pounds? Why didn't Pa and Ma tell May about the trip before she got to the post office? Why did they keep it a secret?

Student #1: Because they didn't want nobody to know that they were going to a far, far thousand miles.

Researcher: Okay. So they didn't want to let anybody know?

Student #1: Yeah.

Researcher: Why do you suppose that Mr. Perkins, the postmaster, allowed May to be mailed and ride on the train? Why would he allow that?

Student #1: Because they, they had no monies.

Researcher: Okay. Who had no money?

Student #1: The kid, to go to the train stations.

Researcher: Okay. But why would Mr. Perkins, did he know that? Did Mr. Perkins know that she didn't have enough money?

Student #1: No, she didn't know that.

Researcher: Okay. Good.

Student # 2 Student Reading Level: High
Date: 3/25/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Mailing May
Story by Michael O. Tunnell
Illustrated by Ted Rand

Researcher: The word is "commenced." Pa and Ma commenced to whispering and peeking at me off and on. Commenced. We commenced to talking.

Student #2: (pause) Let me think. (pause) Quietly?

Researcher: Quietly?

Student #2: And, no, started.

Researcher: Ah. How did you remember?

Student #2: Because I just remembering you saying about the book.

Researcher: Oh, okay. Well, Leonard, looks like you'll be in charge of some poultry on this mail run.

Student #2: Poultry means a bird that you eat or the eggs that you eat from the bird.

Researcher: Okay. What did May try to do to get the money to go visit Grandma Mary? What did May do to get money? To try to get money?

Student #2: She asked, um, um, Alexander to, to have a job but he said that, he said that he, he only has jobs for grownups so she can't have a job.

Researcher: Okay. Anything else?

Student #2: No.

Researcher: Okay. What was the most that a package that you wanted to mail could weigh? How much could a package weigh and you could still mail it?

Student #2: Fifty pounds.

Researcher: Why didn't Pa and Ma tell May about the trip before she got to the post office? Why did they keep it a secret?

Student #2: Because they wanted to be a surprise because they said it was for next year but that's why they were, um, talking.

Researcher: Oh, that when, oh, you mean the night before?

Student #2: Um, hum.

Researcher: Oh, they were being, they were planning a surprise?

Student #2: Um, hum.

Researcher: Why do you suppose that Mr. Perkins, remember he was the postmaster?

Student #2: Um, hum.

Researcher: Why do you suppose that he allowed May to be mailed and ride on the train?

Student #2: Because she was under 50 pounds.

Researcher: Oh, and that was the rule? So he just let her go?

Student #2: Um, hum.

Researcher: That's a very good reason.

Student # 3 Student Reading Level: Low
Date: 3/25/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Mailing May
Story by Michael O. Tunnell
Illustrated by Ted Rand

Researcher: You going to try extra hard to answer questions today? (student nods) Because I know that you were listening extra hard, didn't you? (student nods) And if you're going to say something, you can't just nod your head. Okay? Ready? (student nods) Do you want to say "yes"?

Student #3: Yes.

Researcher: Okay. Commenced. Can you tell me what this word mean? Okay, let me read this sentence. Pa and Ma commenced to whispering and peeking at me off and on. They commenced.

Student #3: Hmmm.

Researcher: What's another way to say that?

Student #3: (pause) Commenced means, like, whisper.

Researcher: Okay. Poultry. Well, Leonard, looks like you'll be in charge of some poultry on this mail run. Poultry.

Student #3: (extra long pause)

Researcher: Poultry. Remember we talked about poultry?

Student #3: (long pause)

Researcher: Take a wild guess. (long pause) Do you have your answer?

Student #3: I don't know.

Researcher: Okay. Remember poultry means a bird that you eat or the eggs like a chicken or a turkey?

Student #3: I eat chickens before.

Researcher: Um, hum. That's a kind of a poultry. What did May try to do to get the money to go visit Grandma Mary? What did she do to try to get money for it? That trip?

Student #3: Um ..(long pause) Um...(pause) I forgot.

Researcher: Okay. Remember she tried to get a job from Mr. Alexander? Remember that? (student nods) How much could a package weigh and be mailed on the train??

Student #3: Um, ...(pause)

Researcher: Is it on your lips? Do I see it? Do I see the answer?

Student #3:.(long pause)

Researcher: Are you thinking? You ready? (long pause) Okay, what's you answer?

Student #3: I forgot.

Researcher: Does fifty pounds sound familiar? Fifty pounds? (student nods) Okay. Why didn't Pa and Ma tell May about the trip before they got to the post office?

Student #3: (long pause)

Researcher: Okay, what's your answer?

Student #3: I forgot.

Researcher: Oh, no, you, the story didn't tell you. What I wanted you to do was think about this and reach your own conclusion. I don't really know why they didn't tell her, either. I can guess. I think that they didn't tell her because if they didn't get to mail her, then she wouldn't be disappointed. That's what I think. I may be wrong. Why do you suppose that Mr. Perkins, remember he was the postmaster, at the post office, well, why did he allowed May go on the train and be mailed?

Student #3: Um. (long pause)

Researcher: What do you think? The story didn't tell us. You have to think about this.

Student #3: (long pause)

Researcher: What do you think?

Student #3: Her name is (pause)

Researcher: Her name is what?

Student #3: Her name is (pause) May.

Researcher: Um. hum. And why did Mr. Perkins let May go on the train as mail?

Student #3: Because she wanted to go to her grandma's house.

Researcher: Okay.

Student # 4 Student Reading Level: High
Date: 3/25/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Mailing May
Story by Michael O. Tunnell
Illustrated by Ted Rand

Researcher: The first word that I want you to tell me the meaning of is "commenced." Can you do that or do I need to read the sentence?

Student #4: Read the sentence.

Researcher: Okay Pa and Ma commenced to whispering and peeking at me off and on.

Student #4: That means they're talking too quietly so the girl can't hear.

Researcher: Okay. Poultry. Know what that means? (student shakes head) Well, Leonard, looks like you'll be in charge of some poultry on this mail run. Poultry.

Student #4: She's smart and she doesn't weigh 50 pounds.

Researcher: Ah, ha. What did May try to do to get the money to go visit Grandma Mary?

Student #4: She tried to say to the guy who runs that store 'Can I have a job' so she could get money to go to Grandma.

Researcher: What was the most that a package could weigh and still be mailed? How much could a package weigh?

Student #4: Not on 50 pounds.

Researcher: Fifty? Fifty what?

Student #4: Fifty pounds.

Researcher: Fifty pounds, okay. Why didn't Pa and Ma tell May about the trip before she got to the post office? Remember they didn't tell her until they got to the post office?

Student #4: Because they wanted it to be a surprise.

Researcher: Ah, ha. Why do you suppose that the postmaster let May go on the train?

Student #4: Because she had a ticket on her back.

Researcher: Un, huh. Okay, so 'cause she'd already paid for the postage.

Student # 5 Student Reading Level: Middle
Date: 3/25/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Mailing May
Story by Michael O. Tunnell
Illustrated by Ted Rand

Researcher: Okay. You know what to do. The word is "commenced." Shall I read the sentence? (student nods) Pa and Ma commenced to whispering and peeking at me.

Student #5: I think it means that they're talking quietly.

Researcher: Poultry. Do you know what that means? (student nods) You want me to read this?

Student #5: It means it's a kind of bird that's, a bird that's made out of chicken.

Researcher: Okay. What did May try to do to get the money to go on the train to see Grandma Mary? What did she try to do?

Student #5: She tried to get a job at the store but the man said "No. It's only for grownups."

Researcher: How much could May have weighed and still get on the train as mail? What was the most a package could weigh if you wanted to mail it?

Student #5: Fifty pounds.

Researcher: Why didn't Pa and Ma tell May about the trip before the next morning at the post office?

Student #5: I think because they wanted it to be a surprise.

Researcher: Why do you suppose that Mr. Perkins, remember he was the postmaster at the post office, why did he allowed May to be mailed and ride on the train?

Student #5: What's "allow" mean?

Researcher: Why did he say it was okay?

Student #5: Because they had, um, she, um, weighed enough and she weighed, um, less than how much that you had to weigh and because she had a stamp.

Researcher: Um hum! Excellent!

Student # 6 Student Reading Level: Low
Date: 3/25/99 Reading Method: Treatment Condition

Mailing May
Story by Michael O. Tunnell
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Researcher: The word is "commence." Remember we talked about that word? Pa and Ma commenced to whispering and peeking at me.

Student #6: (pause)

Researcher: Can you tell me another word for "commence?"

Student #6: (long pause) I don't know.

Researcher: That's okay. It means "started" remember that? We commenced to taking, to writing things down. We started to write things down. Okay? Poultry. Remember when we talked about the word "poultry?" Well, I'll use it is this sentence. Well, Leonard, looks like you'll be in charge of some poultry on this mail run. Poultry.

Student #6: Poultry means. (pause)

Researcher: Remember the commercial I talked about?

Student #6: No.

Researcher: No? (pause) Do you know what poultry means?

Student #6: Nope.

Researcher: Remember the chicken commercial with the two chickens driving the car?

Researcher: What did May try to do to get money for her train trip?

Student #6: She tried to get money from he, um, from her, um, grandma.

Researcher: What was the most that a package could weigh and still get mailed on the train?

Student #6: I don't know.

Researcher: Remember fifty pounds? (student shakes head) Okay, that's how much.

Researcher: Why didn't Pa and Ma tell May about going to Grandma Mary's before the next morning at the post office? Why did they wait to tell her?

Student #6: (pause)

Researcher: Any idea?

Student #6: No idea.

Researcher: I don't know either. I don't know the answer to that question and I don't know the answer to this question, either, but maybe you do. Why do you think that the post office man, the man who was at the post office, let Mary go ahead and buy stamps and ride the train?

Student #6: (pause)

Researcher: It was kind of unusual, wasn't. But, why did he allow it?

Student #6: Well, I would because of him, he, um, he, um, he, um, he don't want the little girl to go on the train by herself.

Researcher: Oh, he didn't want to get her on the train by herself? Ah, kind of like what Lydia May did when she went to go visit her uncle in New York? He didn't want to have her go by herself? (student nods) So, this way, she got to ride with Cousin Leonard.

Student #6: (pause) I don't know.

Researcher: Oh, you did an excellent job, though. Are you all finished?

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